

HORROR



TALES FROM THE CRYPT



THE OFFICIAL ARCHIVES

INCLUDING
THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF EC COMICS
AND THE
HIT TELEVISION SERIES



BY
DIGBY
DIEHL

DESIGNED BY DAVID KAESELE AND RICK DEMONICO

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

THE OFFICIAL ARCHIVES

by Digby Diehl

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Acknowledgments

The most enduring legacy of Bill Gaines is laughter, as I have discovered in my research for this book. He had the King Comus touch: his friends, his colleagues, and his family—apparently, everyone whose life he touched—partake of the infectious good humor. The same spirit, obviously passed on through the EC comics, runs through the creative crew connected with Tales from the Crypt Productions in Hollywood. I haven't stopped laughing since I began this project—and I can assure you that this is not always the case in researching and writing books.

Any large picture book is a collaborative undertaking, and this one has been more so than most. I am greatly indebted to many people who are listed below, but there are four whose contributions have been at least equal to my own:

Kay Beyer Diehl, my wife, my partner in life and in literary crime; she has researched, written, edited, typed, proofread, and struggled through every phase of this book, shoulder-to-shoulder with me with extraordinary good spirits and a sharp eye; she gave her all even when my energies were flagging, and lifted the enterprise to new heights; she is the living definition of true love.

David Kaestle and Rick DeMonico, the most intelligent and sensitive designers with whom I have ever worked; in their hands, a picture really is worth a thousand words; they read the text and know how to utilize images to express ideas (many times, they developed and extended my ideas in ways I had not imagined); right from the start, they loved this *Tales* material as much as I did and their love and tireless effort shows on every page.

Rich Barber, who was my dear friend long before he was my agent; his skill and patience as a negotiator and his knowledge as an editor kept all of the many parts of this enterprise together when the wheels threatened to fly off; in addition to being a great ringmaster, he also provided many key creative suggestions.

Where do I begin to list the rest of my collaborators? In my mind, I go back to a superb dinner in Madison, Wisconsin, where Wendy Gaines Bucci, with her warm and vivid stories, brought her father alive for me as though he were sitting with us at the table. From the "vault" (one of many in this saga) in her basement, she extracted loads of EC and family materials that were the cornerstones of my research. I am also grateful to Wendy's mother, Nancy Gaines, her sister, Cathy Milsud, and her brother, Mike Gaines, for their memories and contributions to this book.

In a converted railroad station in West Plains, Missouri, I had an excellent porterhouse steak with Russ Cochran and his family at the end of several days of immersion in Russ' EC publishing empire (which is discussed in the pages to follow). Russ told me about his early fascination with comics and about his adventures with Bill Gaines while we played with his chimps—Sammy, Sally, and Buck. I also had the good fortune to meet with his son-in-law, Bruce Hershenson, one of the partners in the EC Convention of 1972 and purveyor of the finest movie posters in the world.

In Livingston, Montana, I reveled in the hospitality of Al Feldstein and his wife, Michelle, on their beautiful ranch. Al, of course, was there at *The Creation*, and his remarkable memory took me back to enjoy all of the zany scenes at 225 Lafayette Street. Al's generous participation in every aspect of this book and Michelle's Montana-style cooking have made them special friends.

We all laughed so long and so loudly when I had dinner with Annie Gaines and Don Ashton at Nimrod in New York City that the owner threatened (jokingly, I think) to throw us

out. In addition to wonderful stories, Annie dug into her "vault" for pictures and memorabilia and was endlessly patient in assisting me with contacts.

The first time Grant Geissman and I had lunch at Hamburger Hamlet in Sherman Oaks, California, I didn't even know the questions to ask. As David acknowledges below, Grant has been generous with his encyclopedic knowledge of EC lore and equally generous with access to his renowned collection. This book could not exist without his unfailing assistance.

Jerry Weist gave me an exhilarating sense of his passion for comics when I visited him at his home in Brooklyn. Over the course of other meetings during this project he has shared with me his lifetime of EC wisdom, from *Squa Front* to Sotheby's. (When he showed me his extensive collection of vintage jazz LPs, I also began to develop a theory about the relationship between EC and jazz—but that's another story.)

More than thirty years ago, Ray Bradbury adopted me as an "honorary son," and he has treated me lovingly and generously as family ever since. He and his bibliographer, Donn Albright, gave me lots of useful research regarding his pieces of the EC puzzle.

My friend Lyle Stuart, the publisher of Barricade Books, gave me important insights into EC during a long, noisy lunch at Patria. He was one of Bill Gaines' closest friends and was kind enough to read my manuscript at an early stage and offer corrections.

During an elegant lunch at Aquavit in Manhattan and then, over Indian food at Akbar (when we were joined by Jack Albert), Dorothy Crouch (and Jack) provided good suggestions and anecdotes for this book. Thanks also to Dorothy's associate, Edna, for her help in a crucial phase of our preparations.

Of course, there would be no book without the artistic geniuses of EC, and I want to thank them for their creativity and for sharing their memories with me: Joe Orlando (who regaled me with great stories over lunch at the Illustrators' Club), Jack Davis, Johnny Craig, Will Elder, George Evans, Jack Kamen, Marie Severin, Al Williamson, and—again—Al Feldstein.

I want to acknowledge several others whose help in researching the EC years was vital: Betty Ballantine and Bernie Shir-Cliff, who clarified the history of Ian Ballantine's EC reprints; Harlan Ellison, a great friend, writer, and EC collector who sent me off in all the right directions, as usual; Maggie Thompson, who generously shared the resources of the Comic Buyer's Guide; Tom Spurgeon, who provided indispensable EC background from *The Comics Journal*; Sam Kingston, who publishes *Horror from the Crypt of Fear*, one of the best EC horror fanzines; Sigurd Case, whose new *Past Crypt* magazine is adding to EC scholarship with every issue; and Ella Wells, a wonder of efficiency who guided me through the complexities of DC Comics' rights and permissions department.

Meanwhile, back in Hollywood...

Behind the scenes, making it all happen—as usual—was Joel Silver. Not only did Joel make time in his insanely busy

schedule to talk with me, but he generously has lent the support of his organization, most especially the beautiful, calm, and efficient Michela. If you ever want to reach anyone in the movie business, just say, "I'm calling at the suggestion of Joel Silver...."

Each of Joel's partners in *Tales* took time out from their projects to talk with me: Richard Donner, the calm in the eye of the storm; Robert Zemeckis, truly brilliant and modest; Walter Hill, a secret intellectual; and David Giler, the phantom. Special thanks to Alex Colletti, who patiently gave me a road map to understanding the television *Tales*.

Jack Wohl, president of *Tales* from the Crypt Productions, Inc., is the godfather of this book. He originally conceived of the idea and has contributed tirelessly to every phase of its development. I cannot thank him, and his assistant, Scott Brisbane, enough. I also want to thank Garrick Dion, who brought his own considerable knowledge of *Tales* to the job of organizing the filmography.

Former *Tales* producer Bill Teitler offered the most articulate and insightful analysis of those crucial early seasons, and Russell Mulcahy was funny and helpful in giving me the director's point of view. Kevin Yagher gave me a dazzling tour of his amazing illusion shop and explained the inner workings of the Crypt Keeper. Alan Katz inspired me with his hints on pun-filled C.K. commentary. In some part of his mind, John Kassir IS the Crypt Keeper, as he proved in an hilarious interview. Warden Neil and Todd Masters are artists of costume and illusion who shared their secrets with me. Mike Vosberg offered me a few especially useful thoughts about the preproduction activities on *Tales*. Max Rosenberg, producer of the 1970s *Tales* films, is a charming and perceptive man who was the first to

bring EC to the big screen; he was generous in assisting my research in that area. Freddie Francis, who lives in England, provided long-distance anecdotes and patiently answered my questions about his work as a director. Elaine Lindeloff, at her offices not far from my home in Pasadena, gave me a tour of the *Tales* website and shared resources from her archives.

Behind almost every nonfiction book, one of the unsung heroes—in this case, heroine—is the transcriber who accurately captures hundreds of hours of interviews on computer disk. Sandy Taylor, who has worked with me on many other projects, typed away night after night, often under tight deadline conditions, to provide the material for my text. And I am sincerely grateful.

Thanks, too, to ace photographer Christie Vance and her assistants Lars Larsen and Sara Diehl for making me look at least as good as the Crypt Keeper.

Finally, I sincerely wish to thank the impressive team of professionals at St. Martin's Press, beginning with the president, Sally Richardson, a special friend who fought hard to bring this project to her house and won. Our editor, Jim Fitzgerald, was a constant source of guidance and support. I will never forget one day when we were long past our deadlines, and he called with what I expected, realistically, to be a tough tongue-lashing. Instead, he invited the entire book team to a marvelous dinner at America and told us he loved what we were doing. Over coffee, he quietly suggested that it might improve our life expectancies if we delivered the missing chapters by the end of the week. Special thanks also to John Cunningham, John Murphy, Amelie Littell, and Jim's assistant, Regan Good.

Design Credits

Produced by **David Kaestle, Inc.**, New York

Art directed and designed by **David Kaestle** and **Rick DeMonico**

Acknowledgments

The Art

This book showcases some of the best comic art ever created, and derives a good measure of its visual impact from that art. The cadre of artists who worked at EC in the early fifties is legendary. I owe a very special thanks to these guys and a gal...they make us, the designers of this EC book, look good.

The Photography

I would also like to thank the talented photographers who worked behind the scenes documenting the television and film productions.

For the HBO series (principally): **Michael Paris**, **Cliff Lipson**, **Sam Emerson**, **Randy Tepper**, **Doug Hyun**, and **Martin Black**.

For Universal Studios: **Peter Sorel** and **Robert Isenborg** (*Demon Knight*) and **Joe Lederer** (*Bordello of Blood*).

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Cover photograph by **Aaron Rapaport**.

Picture research by **Rick DeMonico**, **Penelope Orfino**, and **Louisa Grassi**.

Special Thanks

The most special thanks goes to **Grant Geissman**. Probably the premier EC collector on the planet, Grant's knowledge is as vast and astounding as his collection. He was our trusted expert and prime resource for almost all of the comic material and collectibles depicted herein. Thanks to Grant, this is the definitive look at the EC horror comics phenomenon.

Grant is also one of the premier jazz guitarists on the planet (his "day job," you might say). His is a talent of rare skill and imagination, and in the course of this project I fell in love with his music...a rich reward for which I am also thankful.

And as Bill Gaines said, "First comes the word." And the words, of course, came from **Digby Diehl**. Without Digby's brilliant take on this subject, the design would have no reason for being. No author in my considerable experience has ever been more understanding of the design process. This book is a word and picture collaboration of the highest order. And I leave this venture with a new friend.

This book would have been a pale version of what it is were it not for the talents of **Rick DeMonico**. Rick is the senior designer at David Kaestle, Inc., and this project is yet more evidence that he is one of the best young designers working anywhere. I greatly admire his skills, and I benefit every working day from his knowledge, his loyalty, and his company.

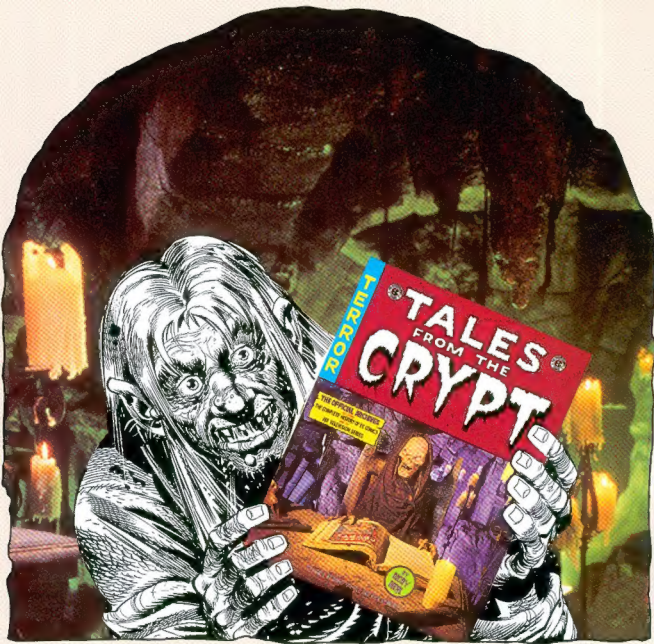
Our thanks to the many individuals and institutions who provided images for this book, most notably: the Gaines family (thank you in particular **Wendy Gaines Bucci** and **Annie Gaines**), publisher **Russ Cochran**, the ultimate keeper of the EC flame, Crypt Keeper creator **Kevin Yagher**, special FX makeup wizard **Todd Masters**, costume designer **Warden Neil**, *Tales* from the Crypt Productions (thank you **Jack Wohl**), EC comics collector **Bill Spicer**, DC Comics, and **Boss Film Studios**.

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Thanks too to **Jim Fitzgerald**, our editor at St. Martin's Press, and to **Twaine Fan**, our production honcho, for their support throughout, to **Mark Hecker** for his layout assistance, to **Jacqueline Norris** of the HBO photo library, and to **Peter Mareuca**, my friend and comic strip collector.

And finally, thanks to my precious six-year-old son, **David Joseph Kaestle**, who—during this project's tenure—developed a craving for the *Goosebumps* books. It provided a wonderful reminder of the fundamental fascination so many of us have for a good scary tale.

—David Kaestle



“A lot of people have the idea we’re a bunch of monsters who sit around drooling and dreaming up horror and filth. That’s not true. We try to entertain and educate. That’s all there is to it.”

— Bill Gaines

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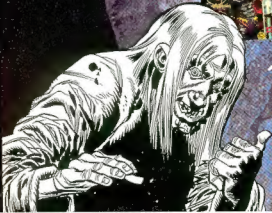
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In the Beginning

We in the United States have come to only a late-blooming appreciation of comic books as a mirror of our culture. In Europe and Japan, comic books and graphic novels have been revered as art forms for decades. Here, however, for most of their existence, comics were looked down upon as unworthy and insignificant reading matter. Comic books were considered mindless, often scurrilous trash, consumed by children and young adults with too much time and too little intellectual capacity. Lost upon the adults who disparaged them was an enduring truth that was obvious to every kid who ever bought one—comic books are great fun.

The comic book as we have come to know and love it is a hybrid—a cross between the newspaper comic strip and the “pulp” magazine.

In 1896, Richard F. Outcault's *The Yellow Kid* hit the streets, first in Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, then in *The New York Journal*, a paper published by newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. Part of what was appealing about the Yellow Kid was that he really was yellow—he was often clad in a bright yellow nightshirt (upon which his dialogue was written). This was a new wrinkle in the newspaper business. Up until that time, the presses had been able to crank out a sickly jaundiced yellow, but an honest-to-goodness egg yolk or daffodil hue had been unattainable. Now that they could do so, many newspapers went overboard on the use of bright yellow; often they were dailies that featured reportage on the more sensational crimes and juicy scandals of the day. Hence the term “yellow journalism” was born (and frequently applied to newspapers in the Hearst chain.) With his bad grammar, his *dis dat dem dose* spelling, and his irreverence, the Yellow Kid was a child of the streets (most precisely of Hogan's Alley). A true

populist, his spunky attitude matched the elbows-out brashness of New York itself.

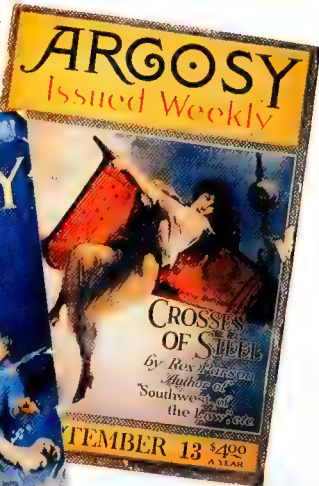
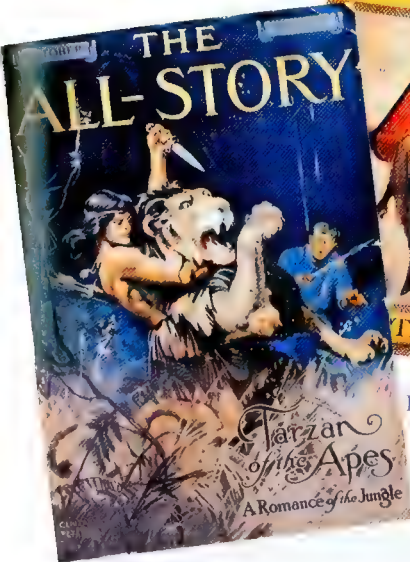
The Yellow Kid was christened “Mickey Dugan” in August of '96, but it was two months later that he cemented his place in comic history. On October 25, 1896, he appeared not just in a single frame diorama with the other motley denizens of Hogan's Alley (who share much in common with Spanky & Our Gang), but in a series of five drawings that also featured a parrot and a phonograph—in other words, a comic strip. Within just a few weeks, Outcault ruled in fine lines to separate the drawings, which became numbered panels.

Throughout the teens and Roaring Twenties, the comic strip continued to grow in popularity. For the most part during these decades, however, the strips were quite literally comic, generally focusing on the trials and tribulations of daily domestic life, not unlike early TV sitcoms. In that regard there is much that links Jiggs and Maggie of *Bringing Up Father* with Lucy and Desi or Ralph and Alice Cramden. (Although it

One of Outcault's innovations was the introduction of balloon dialogue that was essential to understanding the comic strip.



Munsey's magazine became a success, the more so after his top writer, Edgar Rice Burroughs, began a series of stories starring a white man who went native in Africa. In 1912, Tarzan of the Apes became the first hero of pulp fiction, and spawned a whole industry of spinoffs and imitations.

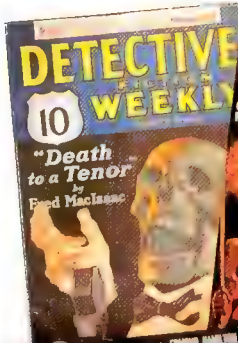


Before it was a movie title, “pulp fiction” was a type of popular literature.

time later, Chic Young's *Blondie* (1930) was yet another ink in the same chain.)

Before it was a Quentin Tarantino movie, “pulp fiction” really was a type of popular literature. The name of the genre is rooted in its means of publication. Just before the turn of the century, the cheapest grade of paper was called “wood pulp” or simply “pulp.” In 1896, the same year that *The Yellow Kid* debuted, a publisher named Frank Munsey began putting out an inexpensive magazine named *The All-Story Magazine*, later renamed *Argosy*. *Argosy* specialized in short tales of action and adventure, and was printed on pulp-grade paper.

From dime store novels to bodice rippers to true crime to supermarket tabloids, pulps are the ancestors of a wide range of “trashy” literature—the kind of reading matter every parent feared was hidden in the bookshelf behind the Charles Dickens, *Anne of Green Gables*, or Rudyard Kipling. (Never mind that it was also the kind of reading matter that mother and father picked up surreptitiously themselves.) A heady mix of adventure, fantasy, and violence, early pulps also featured a whiff of sexual innuendo, with well-muscled heroes, damsels in distress, and Snidely Whiplash villains out to “get the girl.”



Two of the most important pulps were *Black Mask* (1920), which showcased hardboiled detective fiction by Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, and *Weird Tales*, a horror pulp that carried stories by H. P. Lovecraft and later Ray Bradbury.



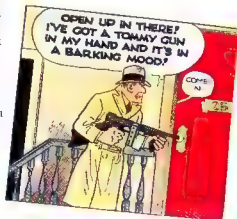
Another was *Amazing Stories* (1926), the first science fiction pulp, where futuristic trailblazer Buck Rogers first appeared in 1928. He became a comic strip one year later.

In 1929, the comic strip and pulp fiction merged.

On January 7 of that year, both *Tarzan* and *Buck Rogers* made the transition from prose to picture, becoming comic strip characters. The stage was now set for the introduction of drama (both melo- and otherwise) in the comics, and more sophisticated characters and stories with sustained plot and action began to appear.

It was one of the many moments when trends in the comics reflected events in society. The freewheeling, fun-loving twenties slammed into the beginning of the hard-luck thirties with the stock market plunge on October 25, 1929. Harsh times called for sterner heroes. Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* was the right man for the early 1930s, when organized crime was gaining a foothold, and newspapers reported regularly on gangland murders. (Not surprisingly, he debuted in Chicago, where mob strife was particularly bloody.) America still loved to laugh at humorous characters in *Gasoline Alley*, but the adventures of poor *Little Orphan Annie* and her wealthy guardian, arms manufacturer and war profiteer Daddy Warbucks, became increasingly poignant in a country where the disparity between legions of unemployed men and women and the privileged few took on distinctly Dickensian overtones. In these grim days a salesman at Eastern Color Printing Company in New York noted the success of the newspaper comic strips and had an idea about how to capitalize on them

Dick Tracy decided to become a cop after gangsters brutally shot his fiancée's father. His murder was the first contemporary urban homicide in the comics.



The Birth of the Comic Book

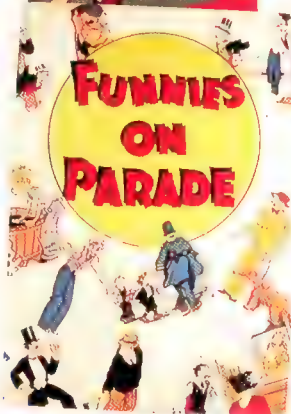
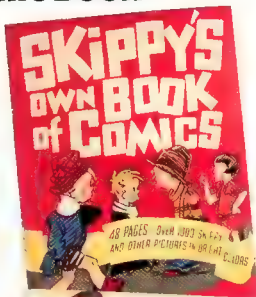
Max Gaines is rightly credited as the Father of the Comic Book. Max had struggled through the twenties and early thirties and failed to make a living at a variety of schemes. He'd been an elementary school principal, munitions factory worker, and haberdasher before finding work as a salesman for Eastern Color Printing. Because finances were tight, he and his family (consisting of his wife, Jessie, and his two children, Elaine and Bill) were living with Max's mother in the Bronx when Max found inspiration in a stack of old Sunday funnies in her attic. In 1933, the heart of the Depression, Max caught himself laughing at the old strips over again. Other people might laugh at them too, he reasoned; the trick was to figure out how to make it pay off.



Eastern's main asset was a state-of-the-art color printing press, and it was here that the Sunday funnies were printed for many of the major newspapers along the East Coast. Eastern's presses, which were set up for a standard newspaper page, were the determining factor in establishing the size of the contemporary comic book. Max and Eastern sales manager Harry Wildenberg realized that the standard page, folded twice (folded once it became tabloid size), made a handy size for a book or booklet (about the size of a piece of business stationery). One page of newsprint yielded eight pages; two made a sixteen-page pamphlet; four produced a respectable-size booklet of thirty-two pages.

In one of the earliest financially remunerative examples of recycling, Max Gaines literally created a market that did not exist before.

Calling them **Funnies on Parade**, he published the thirty-two-page reprinted comics as giveaway premiums to boost the sales of consumer products such as Canada Dry ginger ale and Wheatena breakfast cereal. Manufacturers were pleased as customers by the hundreds of thousands clipped coupons and sent away for the comics. Within Eastern Color Printing, Max became the man to see about premium comic books.



After Eastern paid a syndicate \$10 per page to reprint newspaper comic strips, Max Gaines convinced Procter & Gamble to order a million copies of the first **Funnies on Parade**. However, the soap company made no long-term publication commitment.



Eastern continued to put out **Famous Funnies** for twenty-two years, concluding with issue #218 in 1955. First published in 1936, Dell's **Popular Comics** ran through 1948.

At this point, comic books were merely an inducement to buy something else. In effect they were no different from the prize in the Cracker Jacks box. However, they were so successful that Max came to believe comics had a value in their own right.

The time had come to float a trial balloon. Ever the salesman, Max convinced George Delacorte of Dell Publishing to finance a print run of 35,000 copies. He priced his half-tabloid-size sixty-four-page comic books at 10 cents a copy, called them **Famous Funnies**, and test-marketed a batch at local mom and pop groceries near his home. Much to Max's delight, they sold out over a weekend. Delacorte remained unconvinced that the phenomenon could be repeated and abandoned support of **Famous Funnies**. Gaines then talked Eastern into publishing directly, and ordered up a larger print run of 250,000.

The circulation of Max Gaines' Famous Funnies increased with each issue until sales approached a million copies a month.

Following the success of **Famous Funnies**, Eastern expressed its gratitude by firing Max. Gaines hired on with McClure Syndicate, which had a brace of two-color presses acquired from a failed newspaper. Max hitched them together to get four-color capability and picked up where he left off. He rekindled his relationship with Dell and founded **Popular Comics**, which premiered the comic book appearances of **Dick Tracy**, **Little Orphan Annie**, **Terry & the Pirates**, and **Gasoline Alley**.

The comic book was born.



The Beginning of the Golden Age

In an effort to keep the McClure presses fully engaged, Max was also printing *Detective Comics* for his friend, pulp publisher Harry Donenfeld. In 1937,

Gaines was approached by two young cartoonists, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, with a strip they'd been trying to peddle for four years without success. Thinking that it might interest Harry, Gaines showed him a strip featuring a square-jawed man with one curly forelock. Clad in garish underwear (bright

blue union suit, red trunks) and red cape, he was endowed with extraordinary physical powers.

Even though Donenfeld had his doubts about the appeal (and credibility) of the character, he published the new strip as one of his *Action Comics*. Issue #1 hit the streets in June of 1938, starring Siegel and Shuster's



A rejection letter received by Siegel and Shuster said, "We feel that the public have had their fill of super-human subjects." A very fine *Action Comics* #1 (left), the first appearance of Superman, sold for \$30,000 in 1991. A mint copy recently sold for \$137,500.

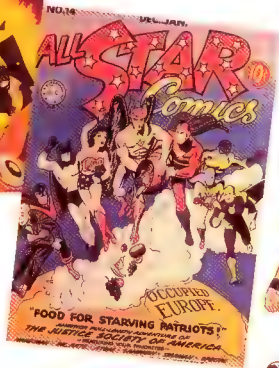


hero, *Superman*. It was an immediate runaway hit, and *Superman* became comics' first superstar. He is also the most durable. Having spawned radio and television shows, four major motion pictures, cartoons, a Broadway musical, and a pantheon of imitations,

Superman remains the single most important character in comic book history.

Donenfeld kept *Superman* within the DC fold, but joined in partnership with Gaines to produce the affiliated *All-American* line of comics, whose heroes included *The Flash*, *Hawkman*, and *Green Lantern*. In what was to become a tradition among superheroes, within a couple of issues they banded together to form *The Justice Society of America*.

The appearance of *Superman* was the dawn of what has become known as the Golden Age of comic books. During that era, victory of the superheroes over the forces of evil was never in doubt. Increasingly in the late thirties and early forties, the specific identity of those forces of evil was implied, if not stated. Even before war against Germany was

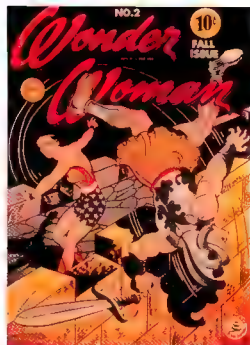


declared, the superheroes had gone on the offensive against sinister but unnamed enemies. After Pearl Harbor, the sinister cads flaunted their swastikas, and the Nazis provided Superman and the other heroes with a never ending skein of villains to vanquish. (Social historians have made much of the fact that Siegel and Shuster borrowed the Nietzschean concept of the *Übermensch*, or superman, and turned it against the Germans who claimed to be the inheritors of Friedrich Nietzsche's legacy. Indeed, it is said that an irate Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, once brought a meeting at the Reichstag to a screeching halt over the matter. Gesticulating with an *Action Comic*, he supposedly then vehemently reviled Superman as a Jew.)



Because Superman always made a point of defending the underdog, Hitler and Stalin, with their goals of world domination, were tailor made as villains.

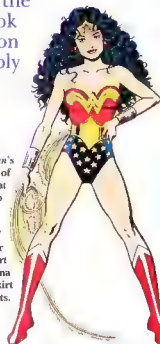
Wonder Woman was added to the *All-American* lineup in 1942. A strong, self-sufficient female character, she was the creation of Harvard psychologist William Moulton Marston. Max had brought him in to develop a hero that appealed to female readership and who would be a positive role model for children. (Marston was also the inventor of the systolic blood pressure deception test, aka the lie detector.) Everyone was astonished when Moulton's hero turned out to be a heroine, but *Wonder Woman* is another manifestation that currents in society are reflected in the comics



This Fall 1942 cover shows Princess Diana, aka Diana Prince or Wonder Woman, sending Mars, the Roman god of war, head over heels. William Moulton Marston, *Wonder Woman*'s creator, personally selected Mars as her adversary.

This superwoman who could hold her own with the superguys came along at the same time that Rosie the Riveter took her place on the assembly line as the men went to war.

Wonder Woman's mother, the Queen of the Amazons, sent her daughter off to fight for "America, the last citadel of democracy, and of equal rights for women," in a skirt (left), but Diana jettisoned the skirt for a pair of shorts.



Despite paper shortages, the war was good for Gaines and Donenfeld. By 1943, they were publishing twenty titles that accounted for one-third of the 25 million comics being sold in America every month.

The once-cozy relationship between Max and Harry soured when Harry unilaterally gave half of his half of the business to his accountant, Jack Liebowitz. Max was not consulted, perhaps because Liebowitz and Gaines had rubbed each other the wrong way for years. Max disdained Liebowitz as a bean counter and believed he was determined to wring the last penny from the bottom line in the comic book ventures. Gaines was particularly aggravated by Liebowitz's insistence on increasing the number of advertisements in the comic books. Screaming matches among the partners became increasingly frequent until

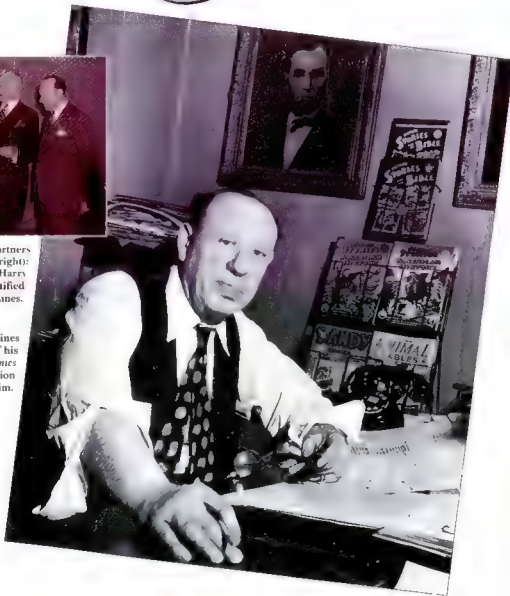
early in 1945, when Max asked for and got \$500,000 from Jack and Harry for his interest in *Action Comics*. Part of what made Jack and Harry meet Gaines' asking price was that Max held the paper contracts—and since newsprint was still a controlled substance due to wartime shortages, Jack and Harry were very much tied to Max until he released them. (Shortly thereafter, of course, the war ended and the paper shortage ended—from that perspective, at least, Max had maximized his opportunity.) In accepting the buyout, Gaines surrendered his rights to *The Flash*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Green Lantern*, and the other All-American action heroes and announced his retirement.

"Retirement" lasted two weeks, after which Max founded *Educational Comics*, publishing the more sate titles that Donenfeld and Liebowitz had ceded to him.



Above, The original partners in *Action Comics* (left to right): Jack Liebowitz, Harry Donenfeld, an unidentified associate, and Max Gaines.

At right, Max Gaines poses at the helm of his *Educational Comics* empire, with a selection of titles behind him.



THE GRISLY CREATIVITY OF WILLIAM GAINES

The Infant Terrible

Born in 1922, Bill Gaines hated comics when he was growing up. He was a klutzy, rebellious kid who couldn't seem to do anything right, and his father Max didn't miss many opportunities to tell him so. The elder Gaines was convinced his kid had been dredged from the bottom of the family gene pool, and was doomed to be a failure. For his part, Bill did his best to live down to his father's expectations.

Max was a strong, old-fashioned father in the Prussian tradition, who felt that his job was to mold his children and instill discipline, not to show affection. He was also a screamer at home, and more often than not the target of his high-decibel ire was his son. Perhaps as a defense mechanism, young Bill developed a proclivity for practical jokes and a puckish literal-mindedness that drove his father bananas (as it was no doubt calculated to do). If Max sternly summoned him to "drop whatever you're doing," to give him a hand, Bill complied to the letter with his father's directive—and let the pile of books or cup of coffee slip from his fingers before presenting himself on the double before the family commander-in-chief. "I was always a bumbling idiot around my father," Gaines confessed to Frank Jacobs in *The MAD World of William M. Gaines*. "I don't know whether it was because I knew it would drive him out of his mind, which it did, or because he scared me into being a bumbling idiot."

After high school he enrolled in Brooklyn Poly but was expelled in his junior year because of his poor grades and his relentless tomfoolery (dueling with slide rules, chalk and eraser bat-



As Max prospered, he moved the family to a comfortable house in Brooklyn. Eventually he bought a more elegant home in White Plains and a summer house on Lake Placid. Bill, shown above with his father Max and below with his mother Jessie and his sister Elaine, spent his childhood summers on the lake.

bles). To hide his disgrace from Max, he continued to leave the house each morning as if going to school. Finally, despite his asthma and poor eyesight, he was drafted. At this stage in his life, the younger Gaines was a with-drawn, rather nerdy young man. He dated little if at all throughout high school. Because he lacked much in the way of savoir-faire with the ladies, in 1944 his mother Jessie all but arranged his marriage to his first halfway serious romance, his second cousin, Hazel Grieb.

After an uneventful stint as a photographer in the Army Air Corps, Bill decided that he wanted to teach high school chemistry. He certainly had no desire to join the family business and work under his father's thumb on a daily basis. After his discharge from the army Bill enrolled in NYU and was within a few months of earning his teaching credential in 1947 when his marriage unraveled. To comfort his distraught wife, Max took her and some family friends, Sam and Helen Irwin and their son Billy, to their vacation home on Lake Placid. Sam and Billy Irwin were with Max in the Gaines family boat when the front of the boat was rammed by another speeding vessel. Max and Sam were killed instantly; ten-year-old Billy survived. Billy Irwin's account of the accident suggests that Max Gaines died a hero. As the other boat bore down on them and the crash became inevitable, at the last possible moment Max picked up Billy and threw him from the front of the boat to the rear, saving his life.

The Court Jester Becomes King

At Jessie's behest, young Bill, just twenty-five and newly divorced, reluctantly took over EC Comics, his father's publishing business. At first, he went into the office about once a week, primarily to sign checks and to humor his widowed mother. He believed his presence at the company was temporary, and among some of Max's veteran staff there was the ill-disguised hope that this would indeed

Comics. Perhaps it was a holdover from Max's days as an elementary school principal, but he never gave up on the potential for comic books as a teaching tool (His use of the psychologist William Moulton Marston to create *Wonder Woman* was perhaps an earlier effort in the same vein.) When he came back from his two-week "retirement," he set about trying to demonstrate this theory on the newsstands of America.

It wasn't working. His EC or Educational Comics were far more popular with parents than with children. Max Gaines had deliberately stayed away from the most popular comic trends of the postwar era—and the market was punishing him for it. At a time when kids were plunking down their dimes in record numbers for westerns, romances, and crime comics, EC put out innocuous publications like *Picture Stories from the Bible*, *Picture Stories from American History*, *Tiny Tot Comics*, and *Animal Fables*. There was nothing inherently wrong with *Animal Fables*; funny animal comics (led by Dell's *Looney Tunes* and *Merrill Melodies*, with Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, Daffy Duck and Porky Pig, as well as Disney's Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse) held strong appeal throughout the late forties and early fifties as the vanguard of the Baby Boom learned to read. However, with sterile and even downright inane offerings like *Bouncy Bunny in the Friendly Forest*, it was

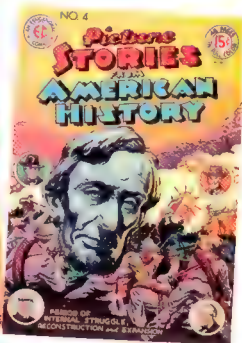
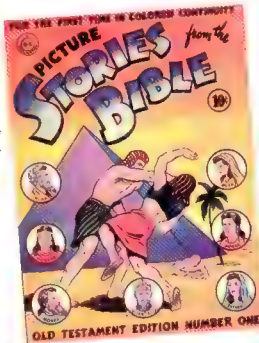
Bill inherited a mess of titles competing with each other to lose the most money.



be the case. (As a teen, Bill had made a few forays into his father's office during school vacations, and had displayed an uncanny penchant for getting in the way, or worse, into mischief.) In the first few months following his father's passing, it was not unusual to find him sitting at his father's desk, playing gin rummy with his cousin for hours on end.

Bill may have had no prior experience running a company, but it didn't take a CPA to see that the business was failing. When Max Gaines was bought out by Harry Donentfeld and Jack Liebowitz, all rights to the superheroes remained with *Action*

In 1945, Max Gaines distributed over \$5,000 worth of proceeds from sales of *Picture Stories from the Bible* to various religious organizations. One of the recipients was Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, then pastor of the Marble Collegiate Church of New York.



not surprising that EC Comics was hemorrhaging red ink. When Max Gaines died, in August 1947, it was \$100,000 in the hole.

Bill Gaines probably would have been an excellent chemistry teacher (the kind who would blow things up just to see what would happen, or make hydrogen sulfide just before an inspection visit by the school board), but he never lit a Bunsen burner again. With the shadow of his overbearing father suddenly absent, Bill fell head over heels in love with Max's medium. If not his message: "First thing I knew, I had to read comics. Next thing I knew, I was in love with them," he said simply.

By his own description, Bill inherited "a mess of titles competing with each other to lose the most money." As he slowly grew more familiar with the business, he wanted to make changes, both to improve the fiscal health of the company and to move the comics closer in line with his own interests. At first, he took the lead from other publishers, putting out imitations of other successful comics.

Sol Cohen had been Max Gaines' circulation manager and, with business manager Frank Lee, he was keeping a eye on EC while Bill got up to speed with the business. Cohen got word to a young cartoonist working at Fox Features Syndicate that Bill was interested in putting out a teen comic, something in the vein of the popular *Archie* series.

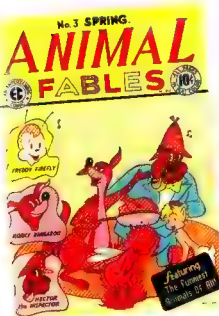
The artist came in with his portfolio. Gaines was particularly attracted to the artist's ability to render voluptuous young ladies, and put him under contract to do a teenage comic book called *Going Steady with Peggy*. The artist's name was Al Feldstein—and the rest, as they say, is history.

In March of '48, Feldstein went right to work on *Peggy*. He got as far as writing the first issues and penciling in the drawings when Gaines called him into his office. With furrowed brow he told Feldstein that he wasn't going to publish *Going Steady with Peggy*. In

1948, publishing practices in the comic book industry resembled nothing so much as a game of "follow the leader"—played by a colony of suicidal lemmings. With the lifting of wartime rationing on paper, there was an explosion of comic book titles, all vying for the attention of schoolchildren, teens, and young adults.



Bill Gaines never thought he could fill his father's shoes. When his mother insisted he take his father's place at the office, he complained, "If he was losing money, what do you expect me to do?"



*Hello, creeps!
Here's a putrid
peek at what's
ahead after you're
done being gored
stiff with pre-
Crypt tedium,
heh, heh, heh.*



The market was glutted, comics fought for space in drugstores and newsstands. The first comic to break new ground was almost immediately followed by a tidal wave of comic clones, but the original usually held an edge it never relinquished. In the wake of an innovation, new knockoff titles came and went with dizzying speed, sometimes lasting just a couple of issues—or less. Before *Going Steady* with Peggy ever left Feldstein's drawing board, the entire teenage comic market collapsed from super saturation. Almost everything except *Archie* was dying on the shelves.

Feldstein was then just twenty-two, but was not entirely surprised when Gaines told

him Peggy was dead. Even when he was still at Fox, he'd seen the teen trend begin to wane. Still it was not good news. "I had a child and was living in a three-room apartment in Brooklyn. I had to make a living and I was desperate," he remembers. He had nothing to lose by taking his best shot with EC. "Okay, tear up the contract," he told a relieved Gaines. "I'll come to work for you and help you develop some more marketable titles." Keeping Al Feldstein was Bill Gaines' first major independent business decision as the head of EC Comics. Together they began a metamorphosis of the EC line, taking a hard look at what other publishers were offering and jettisoning the bland, wholesome comic books championed by Bill's father.



For obvious reasons, comics featuring well-endowed young women were known within the industry as "headlight" comics.

Al Feldstein's penchant for bad puns, which found full expression in the Crypt Keeper, can be seen in the title of the only surviving pencil renderings in the EC archives, "Lashes to Lashes."



Teenage Comics: A Boom Goes Bust

It all started with *Archie*, who was spawned in December 1941 (about the same time as Pearl Harbor). Created by Bob Montana, he got his own magazine in February of 1943, and his antics with pals Betty, Veronica, and Jughead provided relief to war-weary GIs scarcely out of high school themselves.

Archie had the teen market to himself for most of the Second World War. DC came out with its *Archie* wannabe, *Buzzy*, in 1944. Targeting the teenage girl market, Marvel debuted *Tessie the Typist* in the same year. In 1945 they came out with *Millie the Model* and *Nellie the Nurse* (all three bosomy alliterative females were created by Stan Spider-Man Lee), as well as *Patsy Walker*. *Archie*'s publishers countered

with *Katy Keene*. None of them ever rivaled the success of the original; *Archie* got his own radio program in 1945. His success ultimately prompted his publishing house, MLJ Magazines, to change its name in his honor.

In 1948, Al Feldstein was freelancing at Fox Features Syndicate, drawing and writing some teen comics called *Sunny—America's Sweetheart*, *Junior*, and doing a comic book adaptation of a popular radio show called *Meet Corliss Archer*. Sol Cohen reached Feldstein through the letterer who was working on Al's panels and told him that EC was considering coming out with a teenage comic. Unhappy at Fox, he made an appointment to meet with Bill Gaines.

The youthful Bill Gaines and dapper Al Feldstein relax at an early EC office party in the days when they were about to become the hottest creative team in horror comics.



The Bill & Al Show

The new approach was heralded by a subtle but important name change within a year. Bill made the "E" in EC comics stand for "Entertaining," rather than "Educational." After the war, crime comics, all of them the illegitimate offspring of Lev Gleason's *Crime Does Not Pay* (1942), were the most popular, but westerns and romances were also selling well. Trying to grab a piece of the current trend, Bill changed the name of *International Comics* to *International Crime Patrol*, rebaptized the hapless *Happy Hooligans* as *Saddle Justice*, and put Al to work illustrating crime and western stories. So that Feldstein's talent for drawing buxom beauties didn't go to waste, they also started a romance comic called *Modern Love*. Al found himself working side-by-side with another artist whom Gaines had hired early in his tenure as head of EC, Graham Ingels.

Feldstein began illustrating scripts that Gaines had commissioned, but soon complained about their quality. "Look," he grouched to Bill, "I can do better than this." Feldstein had been writing and editing for Fox's teenage series before coming to EC. So Gaines greenlighted him to write his own crime and western stories.

With the new comic books, EC had become more competitive, but it was a long way from making a profit. Gaines and Feldstein were cautiously feeling their way, changing the names of the new comics in response to the shifts they perceived in the marketplace. *Saddle Justice* lasted just six issues before becoming *Saddle Romances*. After eight issues, *Moon Girl* segued into *A Moon, A Girl... Romance*. EC wasn't the only comic publisher doing the name-change mambo. Fox Features Syndicate's *Western Killers* suddenly

mutated into *My True Love*, Marvel's *Cindy Smith* grew hair on her chest and was reborn as *Crime Can't Win*; Fawcett's *Captain Midnight* got an attitude adjustment and reemerged as *Sweethearts*. There's only one American institution that could cause such an outbreak of Marx

Brothers silliness—the U.S. Post Office.

Working closely together, Al and Bill bonded almost immediately, both in the office and outside it. The two shared meals and confidences, and indulged their mad passion for roller derby and the Brooklyn Dodgers together. They shared alter egos as "Adrienne," "Amy," and "Chuck," composing replies to the loveletter when EC's upstart replicas of *Dear Abby* began running in the romance tides. This was more than ironic, since Feldstein was having marital troubles at the time and the shy, divorced Gaines was living an all-but-celibate life with his mother in Brooklyn.

Gaines gave Feldstein a lift home every night on the way to his mother's house. It was during one of these rides that Al began to noodle on why EC wasn't doing better. "You know, Bill," he began, "we're really fools for following the crowd. Crime comics...westerns...romances. This is an industry where everybody follows and very few take the lead.... But it's the guys who are the innovators who really prevail. All the imitators fail eventually."

Gaines and Feldstein discovered that among the common interests they shared was a love of spine-tingling tales of fright. Both had come of age in the heyday of radio thrillers, when families gathered 'round the crystal set the way they now congregate in front of the tube. Three years younger than Gaines, Feldstein had been too little to be permitted to listen in, but he crept out of

bed and perched on the top of the stairs while his older brother shivered along with *Inner Sanctum* and Arch Oboler's *Lights Out*, especially "The Old Witch's Tale." "I talked to Bill about the old horror stories and how much we'd loved them," recalls Feldstein. I said, "Why don't we put this stuff in the comic?"

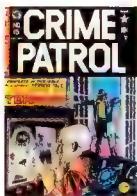


In the 1930s, kids gathered around the crystal set to listen to radio thrillers in much the same way as they huddle around the television today.

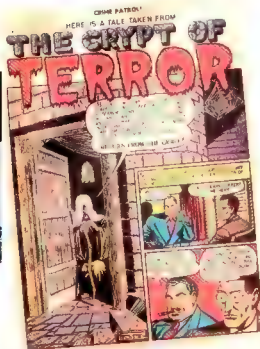
Comics were shipped second class and required a \$2,000 permit for each new title. To avoid the fee, publishers sent new titles out on existing permits. If they snuck up on the name change, usually they got away with it. It wasn't until Gaines tried to metamorphose *A Moon, A Girl... Romance* into *Weird Fantasy* that the Post Office caught him.



The Descent into the Crypt



In addition to providing the debut of the Crypt Keeper, "Return from the Grave" in *Crime Patrol* #15 marks the first in a long parade of Gaines, Feldstein corpses who come back from the dead. Ambulatory cadavers were one of the most popular and enduring EC house plots.



Gaines thought he was onto something, and soon Al was helping Bill take Max's legacy in a direction his father had never dreamed of—horror. They dropped early hints of their intentions into the non-horror titles *Crime Patrol* and *War Against Crime*, both to test the market and to establish a transition that avoided payment of the second-class mailing permit fees.

Gaines was enamored of the new material, and even more delighted when he learned how well it was selling.

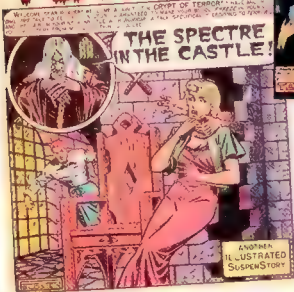
EC's distributors employed "road men" who functioned a bit like a Nielsen rating service for comic books. Road men hit the newsstands and went into the mom and pop stores to make sure their comics were properly displayed. They also counted how many magazines were still on the racks. One good barometer of how well a comic was doing was the "ten-day checkup." After ten days on the stands, the road men counted how

many were left. If only ten of the original fifty copies had been sold, the magazine was selling at twenty percent and that comic was a dog. If forty of the fifty were gone, the comic was selling at eighty percent and was a big hit. Bill Gaines had not inherited much of his father's personality, but he did inherit some of Max's business acumen. When the ten-day checkups of the revamped *Crime Patrol* with horror started showing vast improvement over previous sales, Bill pressed his advantage.

One feature that had appealed to Feldstein about the old radio thrillers was the presence of a host—a ghoully ancestor of Alastair Cooke of *Masterpiece Theatre*. Al told Bill that he wanted to have a continuing character to present his scary stories, which is how the Crypt Keeper was born. He made his debut in *Crime Patrol* #15 in a story called "Return from the Grave," and returned for a curtain call in *Crime Patrol* #16 in "The Spectre in the Castle."

The Crypt Keeper was a bona fide personality from the very beginning. He was

CRIME PATROL!
HERE IS ANOTHER TALE TAKEN FROM
THE CRYPT OF TERROR



CRIME PATROL

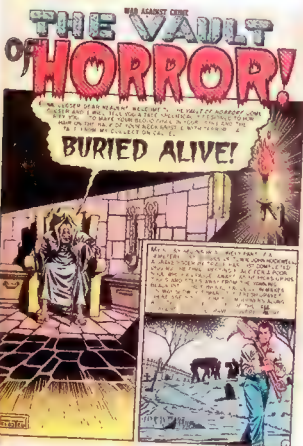


also a wisecracking smartass. Feldstein developed him as a sort of sarcastic color commentary on the ghoulish gongs-on, and used him to highlight the fact that EC horror, however grisly it became, was always written with tongue firmly planted in cheek.

At about the same time, Feldstein's eight-page story "Buried Alive" appeared in Issue #10 of *War Against Crime*. This tale was hosted by the Vault Keeper, and marked his first appearance in print. The Vault

Keeper, like the Crypt Keeper, commented on the stories from a vantage point outside the proceedings. In the same issue was a Johnny Craig story called "The Idol's Revenge." In the following issue, *War Against Crime* #11, Feldstein brought the Vault Keeper back to preside over a story entitled "The Mummy's Curse."

As it turned out, *Crime Patrol* #16 and *War Against Crime* #11 were the twilight of the old order. With Issue #17 and Issue #12, the Crypt Keeper and the Vault Keeper each got his own show, as it were, and the titles of their comics were changed to *The Crypt of Terror* and *The Vault of Horror*. Gaines and Feldstein



WAR AGAINST CRIME





made the switch in January of 1950, premiering the new titles with the April/May issues. They also added a companion title, *The Haunt of Fear* (hosted by the Old Witch, another Feldstein GhouLunatic). With Gaines' announcement of the debut of his *New Trend* in comics, he left other publishers scrambling to respond to his innovation.

The final leap into the Crypt from *Picture Stories from the Bible* was a bit much for Sol Cohen, Max's former circulation manager, who went to Avon Comics. Rather than hire someone to replace him, Gaines and Feldstein assumed command of EC.

The first issues of EC's three horror titles all appeared in 1950. The title *The Crypt of Terror* was used on issues #17, 18, and 19. With Issue #20 (Oct./Nov. 1950), the title was changed to *Tales from the Crypt*, but it was not until Issue #22 (Feb./Mar. 1951) that the now famous trademark logo appeared.



Now that those idiots are done with all this deadly history, we finally get to me! Here comes the real meat of the story. Heh, heh, heh.





NO. 17
APR - MAY

THE CRYPT OF



TERROR

INTRODUCING A NEW TREND IN MAGAZINES...

**ILLUSTRATED
SUSPENSTORIES**
WE DARE YOU TO READ!



J. PINKY
CRAIG

EC SPLATTERS AMERICA WITH

With their horror tales, Feldstein and Gaines struck a nerve deep in the national psyche.



On September 3, 1949, the Soviet Union exploded its first A-bomb, ending the U.S. atomic monopoly and raising the spectre of global nuclear war. Kids were ducking under desks in school rooms all over America in preparation for the seemingly inevitable mushroom cloud.



Atop the Bone Pile

Frankenstein, Dracula, and the Phantom of the Opera had sprung from the nightmare conditions of the early days of the Industrial Revolution. Horror comics of the 1950s appealed to teens and young adults who were trying to cope with the aftermath of even greater terrors—Nazi death camps and the explosion of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Fifties kids came of age in a booming, button-down America during an era punctuated by outbursts of national paranoia. School duck-and-cover drills nourished the fear that at any moment a nuclear attack could send us into shelters to live on Ritz crackers for years. As high school graduates were getting shipped off to Korea, the McCarthy hearings and the Rosenberg spy trial reinforced the idea that America's enemies were everywhere—without constant vigilance we would be destroyed from within. For the good of the country it was necessary to ferret out the sinister Commies who had camouflaged themselves as red-blooded patriots and infiltrated the high school faculty.

It was difficult for adolescents to deal with these deep-seated fears for survival, rational or otherwise, when everything looked so rosy at home. Times were good; the factories were humming. With the advent of Levittown, everyone could safely aspire to be Ozzie and Harriet. Millions of young Americans, who had no frame of reference to judge how far the times were out of joint, were whipsawed by the dichotomy between mortal terror and creature comforts. Cultural historian David J. Skal states the case vividly in *The Monster Show*.

The new American prosperity of the early 1950s was won atop the largest bone pile in human history. World War II had claimed the lives of over 40 million soldiers and civilians, and had introduced two radical new forms of mechanized death—the atomic bomb and the extermination camp—that seriously challenged the mind's ability to absorb, much less cope with, the naked face of horror at mid century....If America in 1950 was filled with the smell of new cars, it was still permeated by the stench of mass death, and the threat of more to come.

Feldstein called his rendition of the Crypt Keeper a "gnarled old creature...with pimples and hair growing out of his nose."

AN EXPLOSION OF HORROR

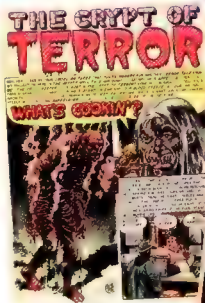


The Time of His Life

Bal Games was not looking for the underlying reasons why his horror comics were taking off in the marketplace. Perhaps for the first time in his life, he was simply jazzed about what he was doing. He had made the creative decision to pioneer a new genre that appealed to him personally. Now in 1950 he was putting out comics that he wanted to read, and his innovation was being handsomely rewarded. Although they didn't match DC or Marvel in overall sales volume,

New Trend comics began to outsell almost everything else

on a percentage basis, and Gaines started whittling down the debt he'd inherited from his father.

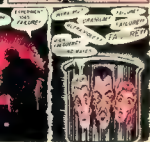


Appropriately dubbed "splash pages" in the jargon of the comic book industry, the opening spreads of these early stories grabbed the reader with superb dramatic images.

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!



TO THE DAYS AND WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, THEY TRIED EVERYTHING!

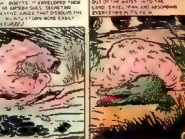
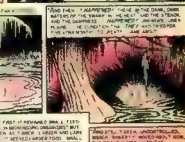
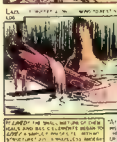
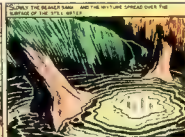


Al Feldstein was the key ingredient from the beginning.

Like one of EC's own stories where one person is trapped inside the body of another, Gaines rapidly discovered that within the body of his friend the artist beat the heart of a writer—and a pretty terrific writer at that. Although a few other writers had been involved early on in the horror magazines, it was apparent to Bill that Feldstein's stuff was superior and he quickly jettisoned the rest.

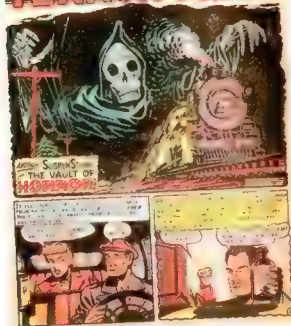
Horror Haikus

Building on their friendship, the two men developed a close working relationship that was responsible for most of the EC horror story lines. Feldstein was the engine; Gaines was the spark plug; Dexterrine was the inadvertent catalyst. In a cycle that no doubt fed on itself (as it were), the perpetually Pooh-shaped Gaines, a binge eater, was constantly dieting. He took an appetite suppressant as part of this effort, and the appetite suppressant of choice at that time was a form of speed called



HE WAS TRYING TO KILL ME! HE HATED ME! AND THEN ONE NIGHT HE ALMOST SUCCEEDED! THE NIGHT THAT...

TERROR TRAIN



This Feldstein story from the first issue of *Vault of Horror* (#12, Apr. May 1950) is unusual because it is not introduced by any of the GhouLunatics.

The idea of a convict escaping from prison hidden in a coffin becomes his tomb reoccurs in "The Substitute" (*Tales from the Crypt* #45).

The first, was that Bill was just anxious to get to lunch. Gaines' love of food was legendary, and the legend (as well as Bill's girth) grew over time. Hunger was about the worst thing that could happen to a person, and heaven forbid EC's head writer should have to work on an empty stomach.

"We'd plot in the morning," Feldstein reminisces, "then go to Patry's's, the local Italian restaurant. We'd gorge ourselves on spaghetti and manicotti and bread. I got fat. In a very short time I ballooned from 150 to 180 pounds." Rather than follow Gaines on the Dexedrine diet plan (which Al could plainly see was not working), Feldstein began passing up Patry's's, opting instead for melba toast and cottage cheese at the drawing board.

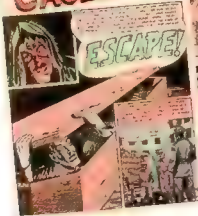
His choice may have had as much to do with deadlines as with dieting. The artists couldn't work without the story, and he was keeping the entire staff busy virtually single-handedly. Having determined with Gaines not just the plot but whether the story would take up six, seven, or eight pages, Feldstein then got right to it after lunch.

"I would go into the back room and write the stories directly onto the illustration board," recalls Feldstein.

"I knew what the layout and the timing of the story were going to be. This came naturally to me, and I was amazed because I was an artist; I was never a writer. I started writing two lines below the top of the panel to give our letterer space to work in. He could letter in the caption and at the same time still be able to read the rest of what I'd written. When he was finished, he would erase out my hand lettering. It disappeared, and all that remained was the lettered panels. There are no existing original scripts of anything I wrote."



THE WHITES CAULDRON!





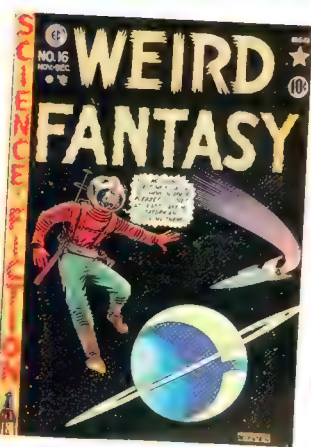
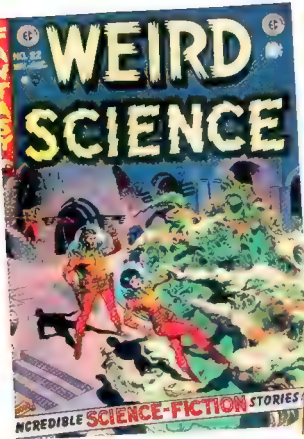
A Killing Pace

By day's end, Feldstein's story was complete, and his emergence with the finished draft was a special time in the office. Because much of the plot was conveyed through dialogue, Feldstein's stories were almost little mini-dramas, like the old radio thrillers. When Al had set down his tale panel by panel, he brought it to Bill, who'd give a dramatic reading of it to whoever was around, often cackling gleefully as he did so. "This was the fun part," Gaines told Maria Reidelbach in *Completely MAD: A History of the Comic Book and Magazine*. "We always thought of our work as being theatrical, and it had to read right." The next day the two started all over on another story.

Al and Bill were lighteningy prolific. The EC production schedule was grueling, and Feldstein in particular kept up a pace that was absolutely aerobic—in hindsight it's astonishing that Gaines, not Feldstein, was the one on stimulants. At maximum output in 1953, Al was writing four stories a week—and editing seven magazines—*Tales from the Crypt*, *Haunt of Fear*, *Vault of Horror*, *Crime SuspenStories*, *Shock SuspenStories*, *Weird Science*, and *Weird Fantasy*.

*Johnny Craig wrote and drew the Vault Keeper's lead story, "The Vault of Horror," and prepared the other three stories in the magazine and prepared the Vault of Horror's cover art.





It Came from Outer Space

Gaines tried hard to boost EC's science-fiction comics, enlisting the successful hosts of his horror magazines to promote them

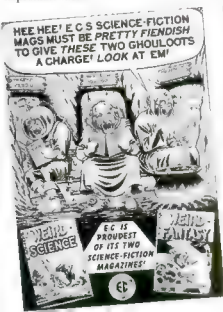
In *The Crypt*, *Tomb of Horror*, and *House of Fear* were Gaines' successful offspring who became the wealthy doctor, lawyer, and business tycoon. *House of Mystery* and *House of Horror* were his two favorite sons who grew up to be celebrities but never do well professors. They were introduced in May of 1950, close on the heels of the horror magazines, and any other publisher besides Gaines would have killed them off after a couple of issues. They never generated anything like the revenues of other EC titles, and by 1953 they were barely paying for themselves, if not flat out losing money.

The fans of *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* may not have been legion, but they were devoted. Gaines and

Feldstein assiduously set out to cultivate them in the same manner that they established a personal relationship with their horror fans. What the science-fiction comic lacked, however, was a host character. (With benefit of hindsight, some have speculated that *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* would have been more commercially successful if they'd featured s-f interpretations of the *Crypt* Keeper.)

Perhaps in response to the impending threat of nuclear war, readers soon expressed a preference for the "ultimate catastrophe yarn"—Feldstein's "Destruction of the Earth" was an early favorite. Not surprisingly, other favorites were tales of alien beings from outer space—the early 1950s were the heyday of reports of flying saucers—and stories of extraterrestrial invaders (both benign and deadly) were popular fodder, not just in comic books, but in movies as well, including *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956) and most notably Robert Wise's *The Day After Tomorrow* (1951).

Working with Gaines' springboards, Feldstein wrote *House of Science* and *House*



Fantasy, just like we wrote the stories for horror comics. Even after his writing and editing duties mounted and he no longer had time to draw his own stories, Feldstein struggled to make time to keep doing cover art. Al enjoyed doing covers—it was virtually the only opportunity he had to draw. For his part, Gaines was delighted to oblige his artistic desires—his sales data showed that issues with Feldstein covers, whether they were horror

or science fiction, generally outsold those with other artists' work on the cover.

Science fiction was Gaines' passion before it was Feldstein's, but he too became enamored of it. Each of the horror magazines trumpeted, "EC is proudest of its two science fiction comics," and Gaines and Feldstein kept producing them because they loved them, even if the customers did not.



Ray Bradbury & EC

"The first Buck Rogers comic strip I saw in 1929 changed my life forever," says distinguished science fiction author and futurist Ray Bradbury, "because he was going into the future and I wanted to go there." With works such as *The Martian Chronicles*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *The Illustrated Man*, Bradbury's writings took him—and all of us—into the future, and into the scary recesses of fantasy. They also took him into the pages of EC comics.

Born in Waukegan, Illinois, in 1920, Bradbury began writing as an adolescent, penning his own sequels to the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs on a toy typewriter. By age fifteen, he was submitting his works to magazines, and he collected six years of rejection slips before his works began selling to the pulp magazines in the early 1940s. Quickly thereafter, however, they began appearing in magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *Collier's*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

What began as an exchange of letters with Bill Gaines over EC's "borrowing" of "The Emmissary" (which appeared uncredited as "What the Dog Dragged In" in *Vault of Horror* #22) blossomed into an affection between Bradbury and Bradbury fans Gaines and Feldstein, and many of Bradbury's stories were adapted by Feldstein into comic form.

"I thought the adaptations were very good," says Bradbury. "They were very accurate. They quoted from me directly. You can't ask for more than that."

Asked to explain our fascination with horror stories, Bradbury suggests: "As I was growing up, my friends and I all loved to be frightened. It's a rehearsal of death. We know it's out there, so you've got to practice ahead of time in order to make do with it."

EC's Ray Bradbury Adaptations

Comic Title	Comic/Issue#	Artist
"What the Dog Dragged In"	Vault of Horror #22	Jack Kamen
"Home to Stay"	Weird Fantasy #13	Wally Wood
"The Coffin"	Haunt of Fear #16	Jack Davis
"There Will Come Soft Rains"	Weird Fantasy #17	Wally Wood
"The Long Years"	Weird Science #17	Joe Orlando
"Let's Play Poison"	Vault of Horror #28	Jack Davis
"There Was an Old Woman"	Tales from the Crypt #34	Graham Ingels
"The Smak Assassin"	Shock SuspenseStories #7	George Evans
"The Screaming Woman"	Crime SuspenseStories #15	Jack Kamen
"Zero Hour"	Weird Fantasy #18	Wally Wood
"Mars Is Heavens"	Weird Science #18	Wally Wood
"The Black Ferns"	Haunt of Fear #18	Jack Davis
"King of the Grey Spaces"	Weird Fantasy #19	John Severin
		Will Elder
"The One Who Wrote"	Weird Science #19	Al Williamson
"The Lake"	Vault of Horror #31	Joe Orlando
"The Handler"	Tales from the Crypt #36	Jack Kamen
"The October Game"	Shock SuspenseStories #9	Jack Kamen
"Touch and Go"	Crime SuspenseStories #17	Johnny Craig
"Rookie"	Weird Fantasy #20	Al Williamson
"Surprise Package"	Weird Science #20	Jack Kamen
"The Million Year Picnic"	Weird Fantasy #21	John Severin
		Will Elder
"Punishment without Crime"	Weird Science #21	Jack Kamen
"The Silent Towns"	Weird Fantasy #22	Reed Crandall
"Outcasts of the Stars"	Weird Science #22	Joe Orlando
"The Flying Machine"	Weird Science-Fantasy #23	Bernie Kingstein
"A Sound of Thunder"	Weird Science-Fantasy #25	A. Williamson

So, on Ray Bradbury bibliography: Don't Abandon!

there will come
soft rains...



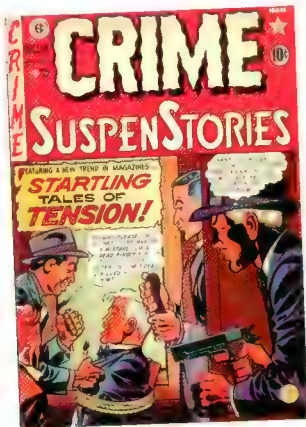
Jolts of Social Conscience in Comic Book Disguise

C *Crime Suspense Stories* debuted in October 1950, *Shock Suspense Stories* followed in February of 1952. Both offered different kinds of "horror" stories, those that proved that some of the scariest stuff around wasn't necessarily from outer space or the mummy's tomb—sometimes it was from around the corner or down the street. Often it was from city hall, as stories in these magazines often dealt with corruption of public officials. Gaines himself summarized how these magazines differed from his horror titles: "*Shock Suspense Stories* do not contain supernaturalism. We want shock endings to wind up plain, logical suspense stories. *Crime Suspense Stories* contain no shock. These are logical stories in which the villain tries to get away with murder—and probably does."

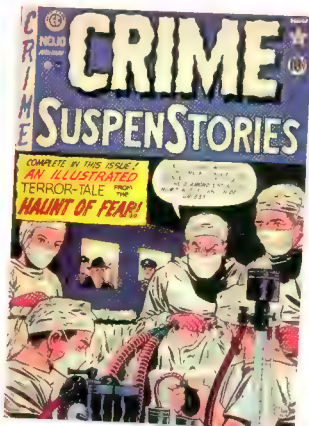
Neither of the *Suspense Stories* magazines featured a host. Instead, *Shock Suspense Stories* offered up a Whitman's Sampler approach—often combining a crime story, a science fiction story, a horror story, and a shock story in the same issue. Some fans were disappointed by this type of smorgasbord (for example, those who liked horror but didn't care for science fiction), feeling they were guaranteed at least one or two "duds" in each issue.



Feldstein's adaptations of Bradbury in the *Suspense Stories* include "Touch and Go!," "The Small Assassin," "The Screaming Woman," and perhaps the best of all, "The October Game."

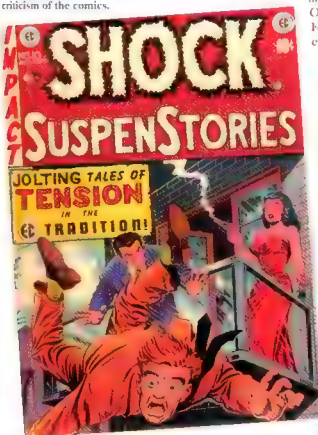


Feldstein produced a comic book version of film noir in *Crime Suspense Stories*, as he cleverly worked in themes from James M. Cain, Cornell Woolridge, and Mickey Spillane.

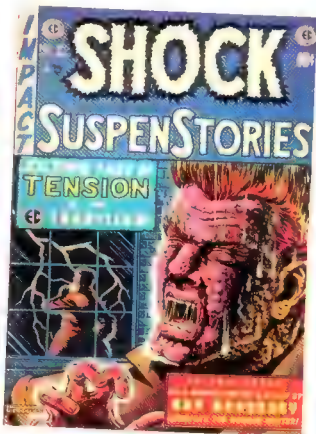


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Increasingly Gaines and Feldstein used these two venues to take on some of the most explosive issues of the day. They called them tales "Preadicts," and used *Star 13* in particular to tackle themes such as racism ("The Gaily," *Shock SuspenseStories* #1, Feldstein, Wood). In addition, "The Monk," *Shock SuspenseStories* #12 (Feldstein, Orlando), and anti-Semitism ("Hate!" *Shock SuspenseStories* #5, Feldstein, Wood). Not surprisingly, this determination resulted both in line work and public controversy.



Jack Kamen's murderous couple on the cover of #10 was more in the *Shock SuspenStories* mold than Feldstein's stunning image of a man struck by lightning on the cover of #7, which is clearly in the horror tradition.



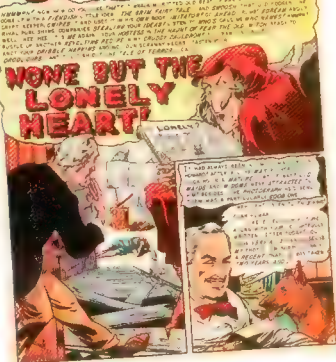
The Just Desserts Cookbook

Although Gaines and Feldstein didn't target any particular segment of the population other than themselves with their stories, the loyal core of their clientele was teen and young adult males. Others have speculated that perhaps Bill Gaines was himself a pudgy Peter Pan, a perpetual pubescent out to shock adults, but the fact remains that the EC horror stories had a consistent, readily identifiable style that appealed to their adolescent and postadolescent readership.

The most obvious common thread was the ironic twist of fate at the end. Unlike the old days of the superheroes, the good guys didn't always save the day in the EC comics—often there were no good guys, and if there were, their survivorship was not guaranteed. Virtue did not always triumph, but on the other hand, the bad guys usually got what was coming to them. In the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe, Ambrose Bierce, and O. Henry, Feldstein's stories concluded with one grisly form of retribution or another, and one of the tasks of morning story meeting between Al and Bill was to come up with the conceit *pour le jour*.

The grotesque recipes they concocted for just desserts gave the EC stories the resonance of little morality plays—demonstrations that what goes around, comes around—usually in some fiendishly clever way, almost always with fatal consequences.

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!



By the time "None But the Lonely Heart" was published, Graham Ingels had placed his distinctive imprimatur on the Old Witch and had perfected his gothic horror style. Like many EC rogues who come to a bad end, Howard's greed propelled him to his demise, despite numerous omens and portents that something was amiss (including the whining of his dog, King).

"If somebody did something really bad," Gaines said, "he usually 'got it.' And of course the EC way was he got it the same way he gave it."

In "None But the Lonely Heart" (*Tales from the Crypt* #33, Dec. '52/Jan. '53, Feldstein/Ingels), a gold-digging man (bearing a striking resemblance to Vincent Price) who has married and bankrupted all seven rich but ugly widows falls for the beautiful picture of an eighth, and his ardor is further enhanced by her description of her mansion. Planning to keep this one rather than kill her, he drives to her posh estate, only to discover that the hardwoods and bronze trims she wrote about grace her coffin, which is lodged inside a fine stone mausoleum with stained glass windows. Naturally, he's doomed to share living quarters with her from then on.



Yum, yum.... That Old Crone tells a tasty tale, but she does carrion, if you gruesome groupies get my drooling drift.... Heh, heh, heh. I'm a much better Master of Scare-a-Monies than that croak in a cloak!!!



Jack Davis took Feldstein's concept of the Crypt Keeper and embellished it. "When Jack Davis walked in," recalls Al Feldstein, "I took him on immediately because I thought his style would be perfect for horror stories."



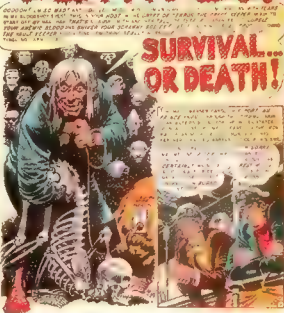
In EC science fiction, even insects have feelings and can seek revenge against the cruelties of human injustice.

World Science and *World Fantasy* were where Gaines and Feldstein placed many of their moralistic tales of extraterrestrial reprisal, where giant cockroaches and other alien civilizations from outer space punished insensitive or perverted humans who showed a flagrant disregard for basic human and animal rights.

Gaines once confessed to being a closet vegetarian, and any number of EC stories in both the horror and the science fiction comics are animal activist anthems in which torture and mistreatment of nonhumans results in similar treatment of their tormentors. In "Half Baked" (*Tales from the Crypt* #40, Feb./Mar. '54, Feldstein/Ingels) restaurateur Calvin Dugan, a man who revels in broiling live lobsters, meets his end in a fiery car crash and is himself broiled alive. "Survival or Death" (*Tales from the Crypt* #31, Aug./Sept. '52, Feldstein/Davis) is the story of two bored officers on a banana boat who amuse themselves by watching rats fight one another for survival on a small platform in a water-filled barrel. When the officers' ship sinks, the two fight off other crewmen as they reach the lifeboat and finally do in one another by squabbling over a piece of driftwood to cling to. "The Trophy" (*Tales from the Crypt* #25, Aug./Sept. '51, Feldstein/Davis),

deals with the fate of Clyde Franklin, a wealthy big game hunter who wantonly kills animals for sport, keeping only the heads for his collection. He finds himself the quarry of a madman, and his disembodied head panics as it too becomes a trophy.

THE CRYPT OF TERROR



By the logic of EC justice, restaurateur Dugan deserved his fate not only for torturing lobsters, but for murdering an impoverished fisherman whose pots he was raiding.



HE LAY THERE IN HIS SCOURING BOSS, HIS BODY ALMOST SPARKING TWO, AS THE OTHER THREE CAR TAUGHT HIM THE SAME LESSON. HE SCREAMED AND SHRIEKED AND WAS BROILED ALIVE.





THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH

Part of the appeal of the Crypt Keeper, the Vault Keeper, and the Old Witch was that they were not the least bit penitent about being reprehensible.

Send in the Ghouls

Franklin's end was macabre, and it was often the very gruesome nature of the retribution that delighted the readers, vengeance that frequently came from beyond the grave. This black justice generated the exceptionally black humor provided by the GhouLunatics, who adored commenting upon the hideously appropriate nature of

Feldstein created these cult personalities in the hosts. They had the capacity to make the darker side of human nature absurdly humorous. "The GhouLunatics were like wild, unrestrained Lenny Bruce walking around the magazines." The Crypt Keeper, the Vault Keeper, and the Old Witch got to mouth off in a way that was not yet common

HEH, HEH! AND NOW IT'S YOUR VAULT-KEEPER'S TURN TO GURGLE YOUR BLOOD, SO COME INTO THE VAULT OF HORROR FIENDS, SIT DOWN BESIDE ME AND I'LL NARRATE ANOTHER HAUSEATING NOVELETTE FROM MY CRAWLY COLLECTION! THIS LITTLE YELP-YARN COMES TO YOU THROUGH THE COURTESY OF NIGHTMARE MATTRESSES, INC., MAKERS OF THE MATTRESS THAT SQUELCHES SCREAMS AND LETS YOU SNORE WITH GORE! I CALL THIS SPINE-TINGLER.

BEDTIME GORY!

the demise. Interestingly, the EC horror comics were the first "hit" comic books without continuing heroes or positive role model characters. The only constants from one issue to the next were the Crypt Keeper, the Vault Keeper, and the Old Witch. Other horror publishers tried to imitate them, but none of the wannabes ever came close to the mystique of the GhouLunatics.

The most endearing quality about them was that they had no endearing qualities. Completely irreverent, they dissed EC, the characters in the stories, each other, and the readership. Jerry Weist, former editor of the fanzine *Squid Front* and currently consultant to Sotheby's on collectible comics, summarized their ongoing appeal "Gaines and



The sarcastic use of bogus sponsor Nightmare Mattress, who lets you "snore with gore," presages MAD's commercial spoofs.

among adolescents. (Father still knew best in the early 1950s; the societal onset of full-on teen rebellion was still a few years off.) The kids ate it up

These photos are actually a shot of Vault Keeper artist Johnny Craig in full ghoul regalia, with makeup by Al Feldstein. Over a relatively short span of time, EC comics developed a devoted following that years later played a major part in the Crypt Keeper's triumphant resurrection.



GOES WITH THE FOUL FABLE I CALL

OUT OF HIS HEAD!

Part of Feldstein's editing duties included coming up with the snappy repartee that made the Crypt Keeper, the Vault Keeper, and the Old Witch so appealing (and appalling), and breathing life into the Ghoulnautics was an assignment he pulled off with great panache. He had them each address the "audience" directly, freely sprinkling their dialogue with beastly bons mots, painful puns and awful alliterations. As morbid as they were (not to mention corny), you couldn't help laughing.

Much in the same way that Al and Bill had collaborated on responses to the "advice to the lovelorn" columns in the pre-*Trend* comics, the two now colluded on answers to letters from EC's growing legion of fans, written in the personas of the GhouLunatics.

HUNGRY, HUNGRY? GOOD! THEN RUN INTO MY MOUNT OF FEAR AND I'LL FEED YOU A MOUNTAIN MEAL OF MORBIDITY FROM MY FURIOUS PANTRY. NOW'S ABOUT THE PORTION OF BE BOP SEA FOOD. CRAZY, MIXED-UP STEW, BUT NOT THE TASTE OF THE TITLES CLOSER AND I'LL FEED YOU MY LATEST SNOOZE-LASH A BLIMP STEW ABOUT MOUNTAIN MORNINGS AND A CREEP WHO BUZZLED SO MUCH OF THE STUFF, HE ENDED UP A DRUNKEN DRIP. WHAT'S SO HORRIBLE ABOUT ENDING UP AS A DRIP, YOU ASK? WELL, OPEN YOUR SNEEZING LITTLE SNOOZE AND YOU'LL SEE! I CALL THIS FOUR FARE.

**DRINK TO ME
ONLY WITH
THINE EYES...**



The primary distinction among the Crypt Keeper, the Vault Keeper, and the Old Witch was visual. The GhouLunatics were quite similar in their demeanor, their punning, and the way they introduced their stories.

There really was a genuine relationship between the staff and the fans. Gantes, the biggest fan of all, wanted his readers to appreciate his publications as much as he did. His raucous read aloud sessions were largely responsible for the recommendation by the *Globolunatics* that fans read the stories out loud to one another.

MEE HEE YEAH THE THREE OLD
BIRLS WERE NOTS ALL A DINT JUST
HEE ALL ARTISTS IN US US THE
BATTLE-BOYS AT E FOWL THEY
MUST BE DATTED TO DRAW THIS TRUCK
HEE HEE AND TAD KINK ABOUT CRAFT
PEOPLE TO SWINGS UP X'S MALL
WHICH YOU BOUGHT HEE HEE AND
BANDS IN BULLY THE HAUSE/SEATING
WONDERSE MUST BE
HEE BAD OFF AT THE
HEE'S WHO DRAW
HELL GO'D A SO
HOW I GOT A EADY
ABOIT EDITORS BACK
TO THEM PADDED
CELLS SEE YOU NEXT
IN THE VAULT OF
NIGHTMARE SWE BOO



"Writers are God's creatures. Without the writer you have no theater, you have no television, you have no radio, you have no movies, you have no books, you have no magazines—you have *nutthin'*! The artist can enhance a good story, but he can't save a bad one. He's very important, but he's not as important as the writer. We never thought so."

—Bill Gaines

In the Beginning Was the Word

Like the snap ending and the Ghoulomatics, another hallmark of EC stories was a love of language, often over and above the pictures that accompanied them. Among other sources for Gaines "springboards" were back issues of *Weird Tales*, a pulp magazine, in which many of Ray Bradbury's early stories had appeared.

There were occasions when Gaines' "springboards" did not "spring" quite far enough from Bradbury's originals,

and in 1952 EC got a letter from Bradbury, by then a noted best-selling author:

Bradbury, a comic book fan from way back, got a big kick out of what Gaines and Eckstein had done with his work. He was not upset that EC had used his material, only that they'd done so without asking. He fully Bradbury's criticism of plagiarism was couched in tongue-in-cheek humor: "I notice that you've overlooked sending me my payments for

"The Coffin" (*Haunt of Fear* #16, Nov. Dec. '52) was the first "authorized" EC Bradbury adaptation.

In early '53 Bradbury was stung by criticism that he was ruining his literary reputation by "writing for" comic books. His relationship with EC remained more than cordial, but at about the time that these stories appeared, he asked Gaines to stop using his name on the covers.

THE CRYPT OF TERROR



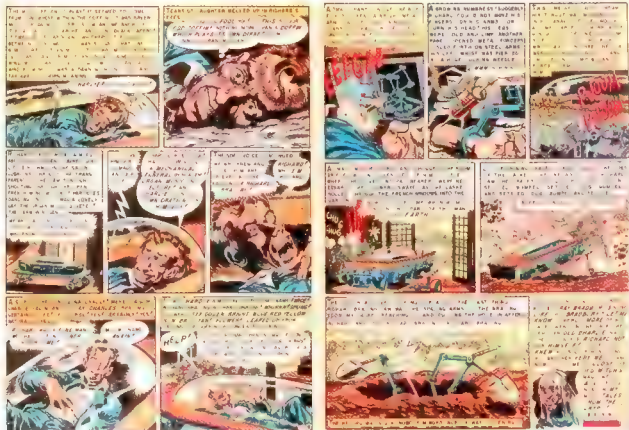
The Ray Bradbury-EC Mutual Admiration Society

April 18, 1952

Dear Bill:

By all means please show this letter to Jack Davis and Joe Orlando. I want to thank them for the painstaking work they did on "The Coffin" and "The Long Years." I got a great deal of pleasure looking at the silver prints of the adaptations. Thanks so much for sending them on! And please thank Al for the fine layout work, and the adaptations themselves! This is a real adventure for me...I've nothing but the kindest regard and love for you, Al, Mr. Orlando, and Mr. Davis for work beautifully and handsomely and every thought out and completed. Long may we all work together! My blessings to you all!

Yours, Ray



use of my stories." Gaines sent off a check and a letter of apology *tout de suite*. All was forgiven and soon thereafter Bradbury's stories began appearing regularly in EC comics. Bradbury's compensation was the princely sum of \$25 for each one.

Bradbury eventually gave his permission for Feldstein to adapt all of his stories from *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Thin Red Line*, and *The Martian Chronicles*, a process that prompted Al to go back and read more

of Bradbury's work. "Because I was so impressed with his writing, I was trying to capture as much of it as I could in the captions. The more of Bradbury's work I read, the more flowery I became in my own writing," Feldstein admits with a smile.

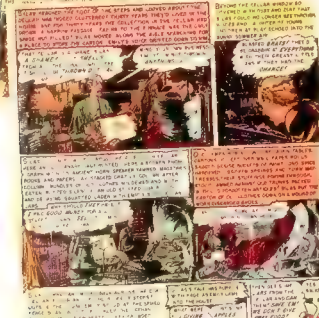
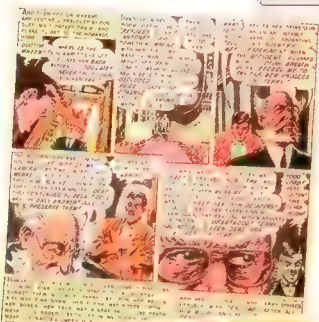
This created something of a production problem in the shop. "I started to use more and more narrative captions to move the story along, and then break into the dialogue. The artists were complaining that I



wasn't leaving them any room to draw. Pretty soon the characters in the magazines had hunchbacks because they were ducking under the heavy copy."

Feldstein's stories are indeed much wordier than other comics of the time, and there have been any number of readers (not just artists) who found this to be a flaw rather than an asset. Whenever this "problem" was brought to his attention, Gaines was monumentally unsympathetic. Feldstein's stories were "very text-heavy," he conceded in 1983, adding a big so-what, "and that's because Al and I both got enamored with his words. He wrote so beautifully."

With a lot of text it was quite a problem for the artist to squeeze in a drawing, but many found creative solutions to this challenge—including the use of forehead space for dialogue.



THE LEROY QUESTION

At Gaines' direction, EC letterer Jim Wroten used the Leroy mechanical lettering system for **Tales from the Crypt** and the other horror comics. It gave the text great uniformity, but the stiff Leroy format was not a good stylistic match with the magazines. When Harvey

Kurtzman began editing EC's war comics **Frontline Combat** and **Two-Fisted Tales**, he went with hand lettering instead—a choice Feldstein in hindsight would have preferred.



Leroy lettering appears formal and regular.



Hand lettering is looser, allowing use of much bolder inking for emphasis.

Why was Leroy lettering used? Because Bill had inherited both the system and its operator from his father. Wroten had started out as a salesman for a drafting company named Keuffel & Esser, which made slide rules and Leroy lettering templates. "My father, when he did **Wonder Woman**, used Leroy lettering," Gaines recalled.

Gaines also maintained that Leroy was the only way that Al's text-heavy stories would fit in the panels. "Because Al used so many words, we found we could do it more clearly with Leroy lettering. If we had wanted a hand letterer to work that small, to get all that copy in, it would have been very difficult for him," Gaines told **Comics Journal**.

The Star System

Even before the debut of *New Trend*, Gaines had shown a knack for hiring quality artists. Graham Ingels was already in residence when Al Feldstein arrived in March of 1948, working first in the old western comics *Gunfighter* and *Saddle Justice*. Johnny Craig was another early arrival. At a time when there was a formulaic, assembly line mentality in most comic book houses, EC under the leadership of Gaines and Feldstein adopted a hands-on approach that in short order produced a reputation for quality that endures to this day. Word got out quickly within the small community of comic book artists in New York that EC was a congenial shop. Not surprisingly, many of the best gravitated to EC during the *New Trend* era, including such legends in the business as Jack Davis, Jack Kamen, Wally Wood, George Evans, Harvey Kurtzman, Al Williamson, Joe Orlando, and Will Elder.

Each of these men had a remarkable career in his own right, but as a team, they nurtured each other's creative talents and all contributed to the Crypt mix. Life in the office was a sort of creative bedlam, presided over by Gaines, now the *enfant terrible* not just of his family but of the comic world. "Everybody knew everybody..." recalled Gaines of his *New Trend* artists in the 1983 interview in *Comics Journal*. "They had a tremendous admiration for one another. Wally Wood would come in with a story and three artists would crowd around him and *famit*, just poring over every brushstroke and panel, and of course Wally, who's

Every panel was a masterpiece, a real Pablo Pi-corpse-so. When it came to art, ole Bill Gaines wouldn't put up with any hatchet work, heh, heh. Who could axe for anything more?

This EC family portrait by colorist Marie Severin shows the spirit of horseplay that existed among the artists and staff.

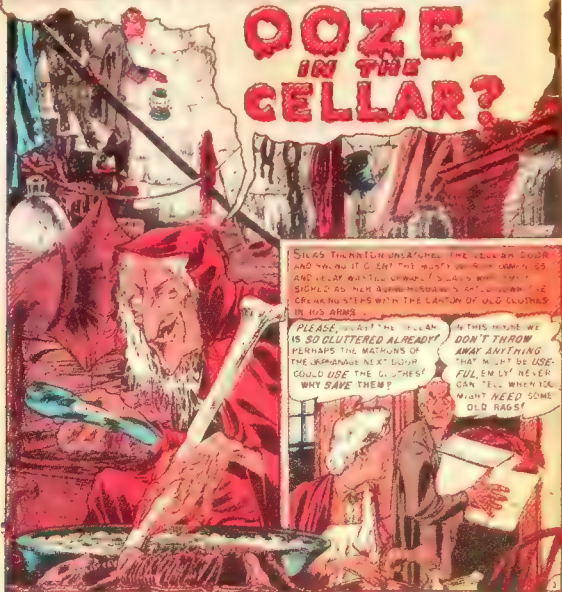


THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

Each story was written with a specific artist in mind. Gaines announced who the target was at each morning springboard meeting, telling Feldstein, "Today we're writing an eight-page lead for Ingels for *Haunt of Fear*. As soon as I'd say that, both our minds were in a certain frame of reference for Ingels. With Ingels, you know what we're looking for: Yuchh! Rotting corpses, moors..."

HEE, HEE! I SEE BY YOUR PALE WIDE-EYED PUSS THAT YOU MANAGED TO SCROUNGE A DIME FOR MY MAD MAGI! WELL, I'LL GIVE YOU YOUR MONEY'S WORTH ALL RIGHT! YES, IT'S ME AGAIN! THE OLD WITCH, MISTRESS OF THE HAUNT OF FEAR! SEE, WHEN MY CAULDRON'S BUBBLING AND BOILING WITH ITS REEKING BREW OF STARK TERROR! COME IN AND I'LL SERVE YOU UP A SAMPLE! BUT YOUR DROGOL CUPS FASTENED! GUGGL! HERE GOES WITH THE HORROR HELPING! LULU!

OOZE IN THE CELLAR?



SILAS THORN DISCOVERED THE DEVILISH DOOR AND WAS THE FIRST TO ENTER. HE FOUND A LASS AND HER WATERY WHIMS. SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL, SO MUCH SO HER AUNT MARRIED A GENTLEMAN. THE CREAKING STEPS WITH THE LANTERN OF OLD CLOTHES IN HIS ARMS.

"PLEASE, MRS. THORN, THE CELLAR IS SO CLUTTERED ALREADY! PERHAPS THE MACHINERY OF THE GRANDPARENTS' BODY COULD USE THE CLUTTER! WHY SAVE THEM?"

"IN THIS HOUSE WE DON'T THROW AWAY ANYTHING THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL! I'VE NEVER CAN TELL WHEN YOU MIGHT NEED SOME OLD RAGS!"

3

getting this adulation, sits there and loves it. Next time around it's his turn to adulate someone. Everybody tried to outdo each other, which is one of the reasons we got such incredibly good art. They were all in a friendly competition....And it was wonderful. Just a nice, warm place."

They were also trying to impress Gaines, who gushed appreciatively over each effort, praising every nuance. The EC ambience of camaraderie and high-spirited on-upmanship made each artist strive to do his best. This work environment was deliberately cultivated by Gaines,

who went out of his way to make sure it was the direct opposite of the constant criticism he'd heard throughout his own childhood. He cherished his role as paterfamilias to his merry band of artists (a precursor to *MAD*'s "usual gang of idiots"), and relished the idea that they vied with one another for his favor.

As Joe Orlando recalled, "I enjoyed working on the stories, living with them for a week or two. It was almost a sexual thing. The climax was delivering a job and Bill laughing. When Bill liked it and Al liked it, it was the end

EVER LOVE SOMEONE WHO DIDN'T LOVE YOU? PRETTY PAINFUL, ISN'T IT? WELL, IT'S NOT HALF AS PAINFUL AS BEING...



"We always knew exactly who we were writing for," says Feldstein. "A Jack Kamen story was almost the polar opposite of Ingels. For Kamen we developed stories that were lighter and more humorous — pretty women, a little sex, a little double entendre." Kamen stories rarely showed actual bloodshed.

"Bill Gaines was to EC Comics as Louis B. Mayer was to MGM."

Russ Cochran

FOR THE FIRST SCENE OF THIS TOUCHING TALE, LET'S LOOK IN ON THE APARTMENT OF MARGARET SINGER... WHERE A DELIGHTFUL LITTLE EPISODE IS REACHING A CLIMAX



I'M 'I'M SORRY, EDWARD' I HAD TO DO IT' NOW WILL YOU PLEASE GO? AND DON'T EVER ANNOY ME AGAIN!



of the whole process and you lived for it. Nothing else mattered — nothing."

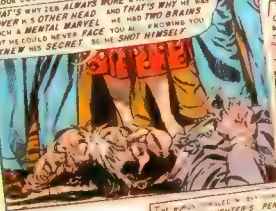
"Bill Gaines was to EC Comics as Louis B. Mayer was to MGM movies," notes Russ Cochran, publisher of the complete series of EC reprints. "Just as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer had the lion's share of the greatest Hollywood stars of the 1930s and 1940s, Gaines had as his goal the building of a 'star-system' for the best comic book artists in the business. He gradually built up his stable of artists and he knew exactly which artist to cast in a given part."

Feldstein could not write all the stories, put puns and wisecracks into the mouths of the Crypt Keeper, the Vault Keeper, and the Old Witch, and produce his share of the artwork. Johnny Craig took over the Vault Keeper and assumed responsibility for the lead story in the *Vault of Horror* (Gaines and Feldstein continued to collaborate on the rest.) Graham Ingels, who had really found his métier with horror, was given the job of limning the Old Witch. And Jack Davis, who had joined EC after arriving from Atlanta, took on the Crypt Keeper.

Two Heads Are Stranger Than One

Siamese twins were one of Gaines and Feldstein's favorite themes, and they show up in various guises throughout the *New Trend* series. Feldstein's first was "The Hunchback" (*Haunt of Fear* #4, Nov/Dec 1950), followed by "Heads Up" (*Crime Suspense Stories* #4), "The Basket" (*Haunt of Fear* #7), and "The Ventriiloquist's Dummy" (*Tales from the Crypt* #28). Others include "People Who Live in Brass Hearses" (*Vault of Horror* #27), "Chess-Mate" (*Haunt of Fear* #22), and of course the Crypt Keeper origin tale, "Lower Berth" (*Tales from the Crypt* #33, Feldstein/Davis). Feldstein speculated to fanzine editor John Benson that the affection he and Gaines shared for the twins stories might have reflected "Bill's and my interdependence upon each other, that we were like Siamese twins in the way we worked together." Another possibility, however, is that they mirrored society's burgeoning concern about genetic mutation as a result of nuclear disaster. Toward the end of the *New Trend* run, two other Siamese twin stories—"My Brother's Keeper" (*Crime Suspense Stories* #10, March 1951) and "Haunt of Fear" #37—appeared. These, however, were written by Luccomert (Cliff Wessler).

I LOOK DOWN AT ZED TAYLOR THAT'S WHY ZED ALWAYS WORE A HIGH HAT TO COVER HIS OTHER HEAD AND THAT'S WHY HE WAS SUCH A MENTAL MARVEL HE HAD TWO BRAINS BUT HE COULD NEVER FACE YOU AS KNOWING YOU KNEW HIS SECRET SO HE SHOT HIMSELF



THE WOMAN WHINED IN DAY DREAMING THROAT AS HE BEAT HER WITH HIS "ONLY" DAUGHTER'S PENNY'S BEATING PEGGING HEALING WITH THE HORRIBLE CONTENTION IN THE TREATURE HE'D KNOWN AS A LIE DROWING OUT OF THE BACK OF HER HEAD

GOOD LORD!



In most twin stories, like "My Brother's Keeper" (top, Wessler/Evans) and "The Basket" (Feldstein/Davis), there is one good head and one evil head, but in "Chess-Mate" (directly above, Feldstein/Evans) and "People Who Live in Brass Hearses" (right, Feldstein/Davis), both are good

REMEMBER THE OLD MAN ON
TELL A STORY FIRST TALK A LITTLE LONG
THEY MAY NOT GO, IF THEY DON'T
GO HERE DOES ANY ONE CARE
-TULLY HARRINGTON- CAL -

THE FUNERAL

FAIRY TALES

The Arnold Stang lookalike dwarf named "Stupid" brings up the rear, carrying a book by "Melvie Splane," a parody on the name of popular '50s tough guy crime novelist Mickey Spillane.

Rocky & Bullwinkle had their *Fractured Fairy Tales*; E.C. had its *Grim Fairy Tales*. Because Jack Kamen's specialty was "horror lite," he was a logical choice to draw them. "I liked them," he told Sam Kingston in a 1994 interview, "because Al Feldstein would put humorous touches in them. A typical one was 'The Sleeping Beauty,' when she turns out to be a vampire. And the little guy telling the story looks like [hespectacled '50s nerd and Milton Berle's "stagehand"] Arnold Stang."

Kamen had a regular slot in *Haven of Fear*, and many of the *Grim Fairy Tales* appeared there. "Hansel & Gretel" portrayed the two lost children as obnoxious brats who were quite literally eating their parents out of house and home. "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" has the Wicked Queen getting the bad news about who is the fairest of them all not from a mirror but from a TV screen bearing the likeness of Howdy Doodly. She learns that the executioner didn't kill Snow White from another TV image—this time it's rubber-faced Joe E. Brown. Snow White herself is eventually done in by the Seven Dwarfs themselves, who tire of her compulsive neatness. (This was something of an EC in-joke, since Bill Gaines, contrary to his rumpled demeanor, was compulsively tidy.)

In the Grim Fairy Tales, the characters we knew as good from the originals often turned evil, and vice versa.

THE SEVEN LITTLE DWARFS STARTED HOME, SINGING THEIR HOMEWARD-BOUND MARCHING SONG. FIRST CAME BOORPUSS... THEN, DENTIST... FOLLOWED BY SHLY... DOUGHTY... TIRED... CRAZY... AND FINALLY STUPID.

HI-HO! HO-HEE! IT'S HOME FROM WORK 'S FLEE! WE WORK ALL DAY AND GET NO PAY! SO IT'S ALL TAX FREE!



Let the Artists Create

Once Games had provided the springboard, he knew enough to get out of the way. The rest of his time was taken up with the minutiae of running a business—paying bills, dealing with printers and distributors, haggling on the phone. Feldstein worked with his team of artists the way he himself liked to work—in short, he told them what the art was supposed to convey, and then let them execute it however they thought best served the storyline.

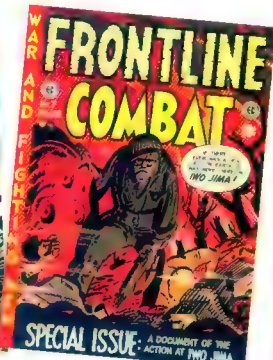
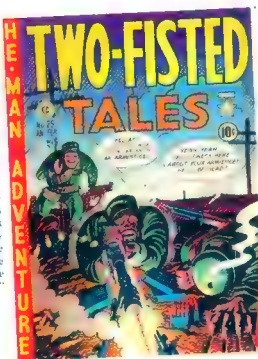
“One of the things that I insisted upon from the very beginning was that every artist had his own signature, his own style,” says Feldstein emphatically.

“I did not ask them to imitate [Captain America creator and comics legend] Jack Kirby or to mimic whatever was popular at the time. We had a stable of artists doing their stuff. We tailor-made stories for each of these guys. They got the storyboard with the lettering already on it; all they had to do was draw.”

Feldstein sat down with each artist and went over the story. “We’d talk, but I’d never tell anyone how to do it,” recalls Feldstein. “If the story called for a truck plunging over a cliff, he could draw the scene from any perspective he wanted. The artist could depict this looking down from an aerial view, or assume a position standing under the truck looking up as it came over. I didn’t want to inhibit him in any way. I never insisted on layouts because I think it takes away some of the creativity.”

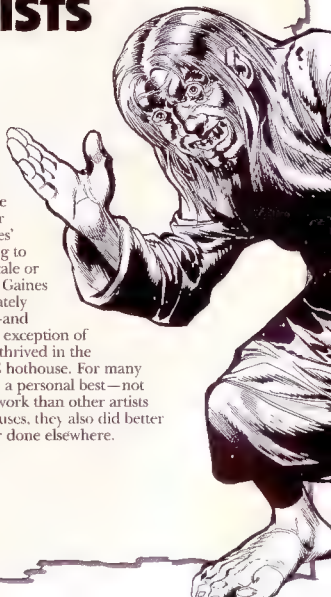
Feldstein’s approach was diametrically opposed to that of Harvey Kurtzman. The difference was roughly the same as that between one film director who sees movies as a collaborative medium and welcomes input from actors and techies, and another who views himself as the *auteur* and feels the movie is his own. Either approach can yield quality work. Harvey put out two scrupulously researched and edited war-antwar comics called *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat*, but unlike Al was almost pathologically unable to delegate any creative decision-making whatsoever to his artists. Kurtzman did his own layouts and insisted that his artists follow them meticulously. Some rebelled (George Evans among them), and took to deliberately altering small details in the background just to get Harvey’s goat.

GIs made up a substantial portion of EC’s adult readership, and their war and horror comics were especially popular with troops in Korea. In *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat*, Kurtzman was determined that all drawings of rifles, helmets, and other military paraphernalia be completely accurate. When Jack Davis brought him artwork depicting an Army corpsman’s kit, he groused, “No, Jack, the gauze pad goes to the right of the sulfa!”



THE EC CONSTELLATION OF COMIC BOOK ARTISTS

During the New Trend era, EC became a magnet for talented artists, and Bill Gaines' stable was the envy of the comic book world. Other publishers coveted Gaines' stars, but were not willing to match either EC's pay scale or the artistic freedom that Gaines and Feldstein so deliberately cultivated. All the men—and they were men, with the exception of colorist Marie Severin—thrived in the genteel lunacy of the EC hothouse. For many their time at EC marked a personal best—not only did they do better work than other artists were doing for other houses, they also did better work than they had ever done elsewhere.

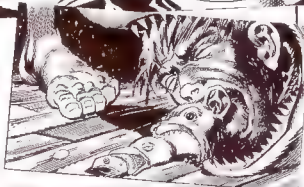






"Comic books were printed with metal plates on the cheapest paper you could get — it was like one grade above toilet paper. If you look at the original artwork, you will see that artists who worked at EC put in tiny details, little minute scratches of the pen or brush, into their drawings that they knew would not show up with cheap comic book reproduction. I couldn't figure out why these guys went to all the trouble to do that, knowing it wouldn't reproduce, until I realized that they were doing it for each other. There was a mutual admiration society among the artists at EC. They were always trying to impress one another. It was a labor of love."

— Russ Cochran



THE JUDGE SNATCHED A POKER FROM THE NEARBY
FIREPLACE AND AS GOGGINS ADVANCED TOWARD HIM

I I'VE COME TO
TO KILL YOU
JUDGE

KEEP AWAY, COOPER KEEP AWAY'
ALL RIGHT' YOU FORCE ME TO ..

УДАДАДАДН!

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S TALE

**A SHOCKING
WAY TO DIE!**

Feldstein drew the original Crypt Keeper, and often had him looking straight out at the reader.

walking corpses and things returned from the dead — as well as people's astonished reactions to them — were a particular Feldstein specialty.

As a freelancer, Feldstein worked on several hardly memorable comics, including **Hap Hazard**, **Aggie Mack**, and **Seven Seas**. Feldstein was freelancing for Victor Fox at Fox Features Syndicate, contributing to **Western Outlaws**, **Western Thrillers** and **Western Killers**. He was also working on three teen comics, **Junior**, **Sunny**, **America's Sweetheart**, and **Meet Corliss Archer** (which soon became **My Life**), when he was asked to show his portfolio to Bill Gaines.

With the exception of a brief lapse between the demise of **New Trend** and his return to edit **MAD**, Feldstein worked at EC continuously from 1948 till his retirement in 1985. During that time he wrote and edited the EC horror and science fiction comics, the short-lived **New Direction** and **Picto-Fiction** series, the **MAD** clone **Panic**, and eventually **MAD** itself.

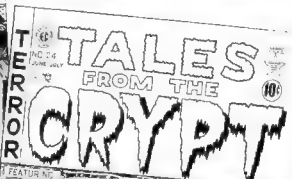
After his long busy stint in comics, Al fled the sidewalks of New York for the Big Sky country of Montana, where he indulges his passion for painting and fly fishing.

ELDSTEIN

Feldstein has self-deprecatingly called his style "rigid and hard"; fans disagree. His stiffness and bold outlines capture the paralysis and petrification that comes with a moment of fear or pain (not to mention rigor mortis), and his cover artwork is much sought after by collectors.

Even after Al Feldstein stopped doing story art, he continued drawing covers. Issues with his covers sold especially well.

THE THING WAS ON TOP OF HIM, PINNING HIM DOWN! HE TRIED TO STRUGGLE, BUT THE THING WAS STRONG! IT HELD HIM FAST!





Orlando's rounded forms and buxom women reminded many of the work of his friend and mentor, Wally Wood.

AND THEN HIS BODY... A BODY NOT ABLE TO WITHSTAND SUCH A GRAVITATIONAL PULL... JUST SEEMED TO MELT... SPREADING OUT IN A RED PULPY POOL OF OOZE...



Orlando resented attacks on EC comics but was most concerned about the reaction from friends and family. "I was worried about my mother saying, 'I hear you're doing material that's destroying the minds of kids — and your friends are all a bunch of Commies.'"

JOE ORLANDO

Born in Bari, Italy, in 1927, Orlando came to New York as a toddler. After serving with the Army in World War II, he studied at the Art Students League before forming a small studio with Wally Wood and another comic book artist named Harry Harrison. It was Wood who coaxed him into bringing his portfolio to EC in 1952.

Orlando fit in with the EC "family" right away. "Bill and I had a lot in common," he recalls. "We'd both had very bad relationships with our fathers which certainly affected our personalities. It produced a certain rebelliousness."

Other artists in the EC stable may have been a bit squeamish about doing horror comics. Not Joe. "I got my emphasis on horror from going to church every Sunday. As I sat there listening to the sermon, I concentrated on those bloody wounds of all the saints — arrows in the chest, blood pouring out, all the rest."

As Wertham and other critics of EC comics crosed in, Orlando's rebellious nature vented. "Bill didn't have the chutzpah to do this, but when they were trying to put us out of business I wanted to get even with all those self-righteous religious hypocrites. I told Bill, 'Let's do the Bible in the real way, come in close on the spikes in the hands and the lions nipping the Christians apart. The next cover should be Christ on the cross, bleeding. They think we did horror? We'll show 'em what horror really is!'"

When Bill Gaines stopped publishing, Orlando found work at Marvel Comics under Stan Lee. By 1957, however, Al Feldstein had lured him back as a regular contributor to **MAD**. Nine years later he became an editor at DC Comics (National Periodical Publications), which by this time owned **MAD** magazine, where he is now an Associate Publisher.



JOE Orlando

THIS IS THE TALE OF TWO PEOPLE WHO VISITED AN AMUSEMENT PARK...AND WERE **NOT** AMUSED! I CALL IT...

TERROR RIDE!



It was a diabolical plot! Ralph was sure Cora would be...

SCARED TO DEATH!



Wood's work was characterized by a dramatic use of light and shadow.

OR MY WORLD CAN BE USEFUL. IT CAN BE A WORLD OF AWKWARDNESS FROM OUTER SPACE BY HORRIBLE INTELLIGENCE! A NEW BEAST ON CONSIDERING MY WORLD. COWING AOTIS SPACE IN FLEETS OF FLYING SAUCERS



LANDING AT NIGHT AND ENTERING MY CITIES AND KILLING AND MAKING AND DESTROYING



MY WORLD. I WHAT I CHOOSE TO MAKE. MY WORLD. I YESTERDAY



OR TODAY



OR TOMORROW



FOR MY WORLD, IS THE WORLD OF SCIENCE FICTION CONCEIVED IN MY MIND AND PLACED UPON PAPER WITH PENCILS AND ANK AND BRUSH AND GREAT AND A GREAT DEAL OF LOVE FOR MY WORLD. FOR I AM A SCIENCE FICTION ARTIST. MY NAME IS WOOD.



WALLY WOOD

Born in Minnesota in 1927, Wally Wood kicked around in a series of odd jobs until World War II. He was still underage when he enlisted in the military, serving both in the merchant marine and as a paratrooper. After the war he finished his education at New York's School of Visual Arts, and began his comic book career working on Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* and Will Eisner's *The Spirit*.

In 1950 he joined EC, and became known as the "Dean of Comic Book Science Fiction," working frequently on *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*. Wood was one of Harvey Kurtzman's favorites, and worked with him on *MAD*, where his ability to imitate the styles of other artists fit well with the magazine's penchant for parody. Wood was the man who drew *Superduperman* in a style close enough for *Superman's* owners to bring suit.

Behind his skill as a mimic was a strong personal style of his own, highlighted by deft use of detail and a rounded, realistic anatomical representation of the human form. His work was characterized by a dramatic use of light and shadow, giving his drawings almost a chiaroscuro effect. In failing health beginning in the late 1970s, Wood took his own life rather than face dependency on kidney dialysis. He passed away in 1981.

Woody.

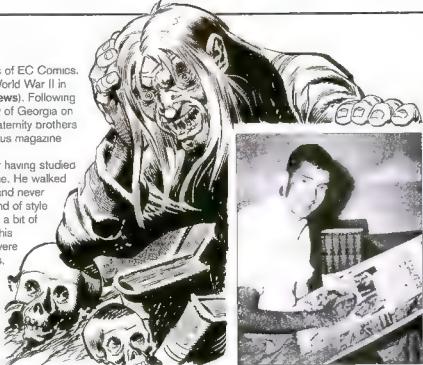
Wally Wood drew the classic "My World" about what it's like to work in science fiction, but the story was actually written by Al Feldstein.

JACK DAVIS

Jack Davis was the Norman Bates of EC Comics. Born in 1926, he spent most of World War II in the Navy (drawing for the *Navy News*). Following the war he attended the University of Georgia on the GI Bill, where he and some fraternity brothers put out a shoot-from-the-hip campus magazine called *Bullsheet*.

Davis joined EC in 1951, after having studied at New York's Art Students League. He walked into Al Feldstein's office one day and never really left. Davis had a scratchy kind of style with a great deal of line work, and a bit of his country boy naivete crept into his art. When Gaines and Feldstein were matching a story to his capabilities, we gave him the "yokel stories or small town stories," recalls Feldstein, "stories with kids either robbing graves or carrying a coffin down the street."

A mild-mannered, soft-spoken southerner from Atlanta, there was nothing in his demeanor that suggested a knack for horror. However, he turned out freaks, monsters, and ghouls that had a grisly appeal all their own. Unlike Ingels' dripping cadavers, which had long since ceased being *Homo sapiens*, Davis' creations were scary precisely because they were almost human. He knew just which parts of the anatomy to torque in order to turn just folks into just ogres. As Al Feldstein became increasingly burdened with his writing duties, he tapped Davis to take over drawing the Crypt Keeper. Davis was quick and efficient, a quality that pleased the overburdened Feldstein but troubled the finicky Harvey Kurtzman, who once remarked, "The one fault I found with Jack was that he worked too fast."

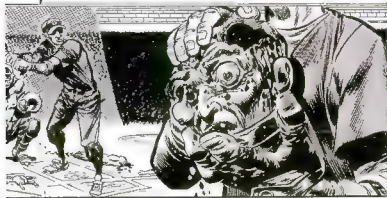


THE SKY HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO DARKEN WHEN THE CHILDREN, DRESSED IMPECCABLY IN THEIR BEST SUNDAY CLOTHES, CAME SLOWLY UP THE STREET, CARRYING THE CRUDE WOODEN COFFIN ON THEIR SMALL SHOULDERS. THEIR LITTLE MOUTHS WERE SET GRIMLY... THEIR EYES GLISTENING WITH TEARS. MR. COOTES LOOKED UP FROM HIS GARDENING WORK AND GRINNED...

WELL, I'LL BE BURNED...

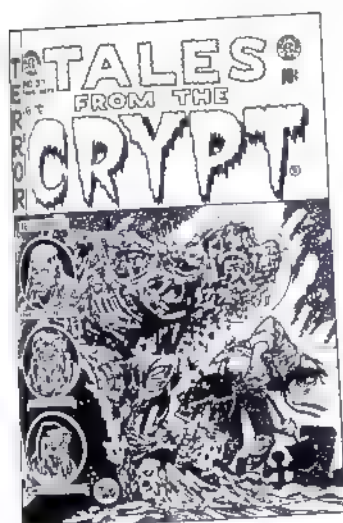


Davis could draw everything from tearful children to homicidal maniacs, but the gliblet-laced "Foul Play" (above) is one story he'd rather forget.





One of Davis' many strong points was his mastery of facial expressions. Both the oaf and the pixilated convict demonstrate how Davis could effortlessly shift from horror into MAD.



Although their features were distorted, the human lineage of Davis' werewolves, vampires, and other monsters was always evident.



In 1952 he began editing **MAD**, drawing on campus humor magazines for inspiration. After an acrimonious tussle with Gaines, Kurtzman left in 1956 to start **Trump** for Hugh Helmer, plus **Humbug**, **Hepl**, and **Little Annie Fanny** with Bill Elder. He passed away in 1993.

H. Kurtz &

IT WAS THE MOST UNUSUAL FRATERNITY BROT ATHON EVER SEEN ON THE CAMPUS. ON NO ANY OTHER CAMPUS. FOR THAT MATTER? THE THREE PLEDGERS WERE TAKEN OUT TO THE OLD PALMER HOME ON THAT INFAMOUS NIGHT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO AND INSTEAD OF THE PLACE BEING BRUTALLY HAUNTED, IT TURNED OUT A

HOUSE OF HORROR



HAD MY BEGINNING? TO DAY FIFT
THE RE. 5 710, 1 MO. 4 YRS. 8 WTS
PENNED AT THE PALMER PLACE

$\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{1}{\rho} \right) = - \frac{1}{\rho^2} \frac{d\rho}{dt}$

HE TOLD ME
FOR THE NTH IN 1957
IT WERE THE CLOSING
BECAUSE OF THE BIG
DUMP BEFORE
AT MOUNTAIN



HORROR in the NIGHT



Kurtzman had to rein in his gift for caricature and parody to work in horror, but he later inspired a whole new generation of underground cartoonists.

Elder was and is a master at mimicking the styles of other artists.

BILL (WILL) ELDER

Bill Elder (he didn't become Will until later in his career) was born William Wolf Eisenberg in the Bronx in 1922. The son of Polish immigrants, he attended New York's High School of Music and Art (as did many comic book artists). He had been an ardent comics fan in his youth, and was particularly fond of **Li'l Abner** and the **Katzenjammer Kids**. During World War II, Elder served in the Army Air Corps as a map designer. Believing his assignment would keep him behind the lines, he was horrified to find himself ahead of the rest of the troops, gathering information, and was in the thick of things during the Battle of the Bulge.

Elder was a high school chum of Harvey Kurtzman, and the two shared many aspects of their careers. He was something of a class clown. He was also something of an "anarchist." Like the Marx Brothers, he enjoyed creating art that made large tears in the "fabric of society," and exposing hypocrisy wherever he found it. It was a life philosophy tailor-made for **MAD**.

Elder's drawing of a "just divorced" St. Nick for Al Feldstein's **Panic** kicked off legal battles both in Massachusetts and New York. Like Wally Wood, Elder was and is a master at mimicking the styles of other artists. It was Elder who drew **MAD**'s withering takeoffs on Mickey Mouse (**Mickey Rodent**), and Archie (**Starche**) — in a style blisteringly close to the original. After leaving **MAD** with Kurtzman in 1956, he was involved with subsequent Kurtzman ventures including **Trump**, **Humbug**, and **Help!** In 1962 the two began collaborating on **Playboy's** ribald **Little Annie Fanny**, ending in 1988.

Bill Elder



THE NEXT MORNING THEY FOUND WHAT WAS LEFT OF CHIEF MILLER LYING BESIDE THE NEW FIVE ENGINE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE DESCENT POLE IN A POOL OF BLOOD. HIS ARMS AND LEGS HAD BEEN SEVERED FROM HIS BODY AND WERE TOSSED NEARBY. IN TWO SOMEONE OR SOMETHING HAD REPLACED THE DESCENT POLE WITH A STEEL STRIP SHARPENED TO A KEEN HAZARD-EDGE.



Elder's comic sensibilities are visible even in his horror drawings.

Crandall's use of fine shading and cross-hatching was admired by other artists, and gave his work an etchinglike quality.



REED CRANDALL

Reed Crandall was born in Indiana in 1917 and educated at the Cleveland School of Art. In 1940, he began with the Eisner-Iger shop (where the very young Al Feldstein also worked), then moved on to Quality Comics, where he worked on **Hit Comics** and **Crack**. Although he was not the originator of the characters, he drew the very successful **Blackhawk** and **Doll Man** in the late 1940s.

Like virtually all the other artists in Gaines' stable, Crandall was not "recruited." In a **Comics Journal** interview, Gaines recalled, "Crandall was the last EC artist to arrive. He walked in and said, 'I'm Reed Crandall.' I said, 'So what took you so long?' We've been sitting here waiting for you!"

Crandall arrived in 1953 with his highly regarded portfolio, and was looked up to by the rest of the EC staff. Feldstein fed him assignments right away, putting him to work on the three horror titles, and especially on **Shock SuspenStories** and **Crime SuspenStories**. He also drew a Ray Bradbury adaptation, "The Silent Town," for **Weird Fantasy**. When Gaines was forced to fold the **New Trend**, Crandall worked on **New Direction** titles and began doing cover work for the ill-fated **Picto-Fiction** line.

Following the collapse of EC, he continued to work in comics on such publications as **Eerie**, **Creepy**, and **Classics Illustrated**. He passed away in 1983.

REED CRANDALL

Crandall's skillful use of fine line shading gave his work a film noir sensibility evocative of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

HORROR **THE VAULT OF HORROR** 10¢
NO 32 AUG 1977



HORROR **THE VAULT OF HORROR** 10¢
NO 28 FEB JAN



HORROR **THE VAULT OF HORROR** 10¢
NO 35 MARCH



HORROR **THE VAULT OF HORROR** 10¢
NO 26 AUG SEPT



Johnny Craig edited *Vault of Horror* and drew all its covers. Like Feldstein, he was a master of the single bold image that grabbed readers from across the room.



BEING SLEEPING IN THE MUD, I
TAKE MY WAY SOMEHOW TO MY
I TRIP TO A SMALL HOTEL
IS DISTANT, SMALL AND DRAB
SAFE IN MY ROOM I FLOP ON
ED I SLEEP AND DREAM

I WAKE UP SEE NO VISIONS OF HER
IN THE ROOM SO REAL I FEEL
COLD, THEN THEM! FEELS
IMPOSSIBLE! SHE CROWDS INTO
MY VERY MIND

I PACE THE FLOOR NERVOUSLY SENS-
ING HER PERFUME S WITH ME, SEEING
HER WONDROUS BEAUTY THOUGH MY
EYES ARE SHUT KNOWING SHE'S
CERTAIN DEATH!



With a clean and extremely commercial style, Johnny Craig's figures are somewhat reminiscent of Milt Caniff (Terry & the Pirates).

Craig frequently used humor and fantasy to offset (and thus augment) the horror in his stories, and often preferred to suggest rather than overtly depict the shocking finale.



JOHNNY CRAIG

Born in Pleasantville, New York, in 1926, Craig joined EC in 1947 after attending the Art Students League and a stint in the Army during World War II. Craig's style of artwork was clean and uncluttered and extremely commercial. His figures could just as well have been modeling clothing or selling soap, which made their vile

and violent behavior all the more shocking. Many of his horror stories are tales of domestic tranquility gone fatally awry.

Craig was hired by Max Gaines and was the senior member of the EC staff. When Bill took over, he assigned Craig to draw the first EC horror story, which appeared in *Moon Girl* #5. After Feldstein turned his attention to writing, Craig took the lead on *The Vault of Horror*. He became the man behind the Vault Keeper, drew all of the *Vault* covers, and the lead story. Unlike the other EC artists, Craig wrote his own stories, working directly with Gaines to formulate the plot. A meticulous craftsman, he worked slowly, writing his story in a week and taking another three weeks to draw it.



If it dripped or oozed or rotted,
Ghastly did it better than anyone else.

CONFUSED BEWILDERED .THE CORPSE OF ROGER KANE
TRIES TO COMFORT THE HYSTERICAL SCREAMING WOMAN

I KNEW I HAD TO COME SO I
CAME I WALKED ALL THE WAY
TWELVE MILES

AAAAGH

THE WELL-WATER HE GOT IN
THROUGH THE PUMP! JAKE!

JAKE!
PLEASE...

EEEEEEEE GGGHHH

BUT I KNEW SHE COULD
NEVER LOVE A RAGMAN!

GGNNNNNGGGGG

HER GURGUNG SCREAM FADED AWAY AND THE TURPID LIQUID
ROILED A MOMENT...AND THEN IT, TOO, QUIETED. AND THERE
WAS SILENCE.

THE BLOOD WAS FLOWING NOW! HE COULD FEEL THE
WARM LIQUID RUNNING OUT OVER HIS WRIST

SINKING DEEPER
DEEPER!

Artists like Kamen excelled at suggesting the terror
that occurred "offstage," but Ingels made it quite
visible, so much so that his liquid style epitomized
the gothic horror genre.



GHASTLY GRAHAM INGELS

Born in 1915, Graham Ingels was one of the first artists to come to work for EC, joining the company in 1947 just after Bill Gaines had taken over following the death of his father. Although he worked on western, crime, and romance stories, he found his true metier in horror. He became the alter ego of the Old Witch, signing his drawings with his moniker, "Ghastly," a nickname that was richly deserved. Although others portrayed horror as just step or two around the corner from real life, Ingels took it to the extreme. He was, as it were, a master of decomposition, and had his own personal fan following.

He was always uneasy with his talent for the macabre. A devout Catholic, his conscience was increasingly troubled by the horror genre, and even more

so, presumably, by his special knack for it. He developed a dependency on alcohol which led to missed deadlines. To compensate, Feldstein took to dissembling about when the artwork was really needed, pushing up the deadline by a few days so that when Ingels was "late," he was still on time.

Once Gaines dropped the EC horror comics line under pressure from critics, Ingels had a particularly difficult time. Since he was so well known as a horror expert, publishers had trouble believing he could draw anything else. Eventually he found work teaching at the Famous Artists School in Westport, Connecticut, then moved to Florida to give art lessons out of his home. Once in Florida he deliberately cut himself off from his former life. Gaines had to seek him out to pay him royalties on his work — money which he at first rejected. Before he died in 1991, however, he reconciled with his conscience, and painted a number of oils of the Old Witch to be sold at auction.

GHASTLY



His style is fluid and almost cinematic

AL WILLIAMSON

Al Williamson was the baby of the EC family of artists. When he joined the company in 1952, he was just twenty-one years old, and in many ways was like the 'kid brother': the others were already family men. Born in Bogota, Colombia, he was the only member of the staff who'd been too young to serve during World War II. Williamson was working with Richard Hughes on *Forbidden Worlds* when he brought his portfolio to EC at the suggestion of Wally Wood.

Once taken into the EC fold, he frequently worked in collaboration with Frank Frazetta, Roy Krenkel, and Angelo Torres, even though his was the only signature that appeared on the panels. Williamson loved pencil work but was "deathly afraid" of inking, a task that Frazetta often undertook for him. His style is fluid and almost cinematic — Williamson liked to use movie stills for reference, and many of his heroes bear a striking resemblance to Stewart Granger. Although Williamson worked on **Tales from the Crypt** and **Vault of Horror**, he came to specialize in science fiction, both at EC and later on after **New Trend** folded. A graduate of Pratt Institute, Williamson was inspired to be a comic artist by Alex Raymond's **Flash Gordon**, and eventually went on to follow in Raymond's footsteps, working on **Flash Gordon** in the 1960s, as well as **Secret Agent Corrigan** and the **Star Wars** comic strip.

AL
WILKINSON

THE VAULT OF HORROR!



Williamson's fluid, cinematic style was apparent even in his first assignment (above), and became increasingly evident in his later horror and science fiction work (below) – as did the influence of mentor Alex **Flash Gordon** Raymond.



THE ARRIVAL



A SCIENCE-FICTION SUSPENSE STORY

GEORGE EVANS

A Pennsylvania native, George Evans was born in 1920. He took night classes at the Art Students League and jumped right into the comic book field following his stint as an Air Force mechanic in World War II. Perhaps it was this up-close-and-personal relationship with aircraft that gave his illustrations of machinery such power.

Evans credits (or blames) Al Williamson for bringing him into the EC fold, and the two share a friendship that dates back to 1945. Evans was working full time at Fawcett when that firm lost its legal battle with DC Comics, effectively putting them out of business. DC had alleged that **Captain Marvel** was nothing more than a clone of **Superman**, and won. Williamson, who had begun working at EC, encouraged Evans to join the team. He was hired right away. (Evans paid him back by memorializing his name in many of his stories, naming a store "Williamson & Co." or putting up a billboard advertising "Williamson's Hair Tonic.")

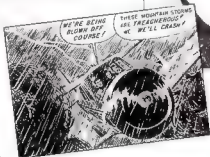
With his technical knowledge and his ability to render machinery accurately, Evans was a Kurtzman favorite, but he chafed under Kurtzman's tissue overlays, which specified the exact placement of each figure. Even alterations in the name of greater accuracy (which was a particular Kurtzman trademark) were not appreciated. "Harvey would never say a thing when he saw my changes," recalled Evans, "but after it was published he'd reveal that I'd desecrated his story."

George vastly preferred the freedom of working with Feldstein on the horror magazines. "I loved Bradbury's stories and Al's adaptations because he knew how to keep the Bradbury feeling in his scripts," said Evans in a 1992 interview with Paul Wardle (published in *Comics Journal*, May 1995). He also felt buoyed by the appreciation that abounded at EC. "This was the joy of working for Al. When you brought in the finished art, he would say, 'Oh geez, I never imagined a picture like that! Look at this. Bill! And Bill would look and say, 'Holy crapes! Here's another one, Al.' This was a delight. You'd work for them for free."

Evans' puckish sense of humor prompted him to christen billboards and commercial establishments after pal Al Williamson, in appreciation for Williamson's boost in bringing him to EC. (Note the small sign which reads "Bookie Inside.")



George Evans' poor eyesight grounded him during World War II, but he was able to draw aircraft as if he'd been a barnstorming aviator.



Evans' work has a stop-action quality — like a moment frozen in time, or a frame clipped from a reel of motion picture film.

THE OLD MAN SAT IN THE DAMP DARKNESS OF HIS SUBTERRANEAN ASYLUM CELL, SOBBING QUIETLY. HE SAT WITH WIDE STARING EYES AND CLENCHED FISTS AMID THE FOUL ODOR OF DECAY AND ROT AND UNREMOVED HUMAN EXCREMENTS. AND HE CALLED HER NAME SOFTLY, SOFTLY.

LINDA! LINDA! COME BACK TO ME, LINDA



MARIE SEVERIN

Marie Severin was one of the few women admitted to what was very much the boys' clubhouse among the comic book artists.

She was also the last person to touch the artwork before it went off to the printer. Severin was EC's colorist—it was her selection of bright pure hues that added an extra layer of fright to the artists' panels. She also added a layer of continuity that was sometimes lacking. Some artists would include a belt or piece of jewelry or other article of clothing in one panel, but omit it thereafter. This kind of detail might be missed when the art was black & white, but Severin would be able to pick it up.

Al Feldstein only half-jokingly referred to Marie Severin as the "conscience" of EC. Gaines and Feldstein both allege that she subdued any panel she found overly gory by using dark blues or purples rather than her customary brighter colors, an assertion Severin denies, saying, "I would have no right to obliterate art."

After leaving EC, Severin enjoyed a lengthy career at Marvel, working on *The Hulk* and a Marvel superhero parody entitled *Not Brand Echh*.



FEATURING



THE CRYPT KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



Severin added color and gave instructions to printers for matching her hues (above). Today her hand-colored silver prints (left) are prized by collectors. A 1955 self-caricature (below) that shows her wielding a brush (as well as a bucket of whitewash) supports the theory that she was the office censor.



Credit Where It's Due

Freelance artists will tell you that it takes a lot more than just artistic elbow room to make them gravitate toward a certain publisher. Baldly put, it takes money, and money for artists was something that Gaines (otherwise a notorious tightwad) was quite willing to part with. Almost from the beginning he paid his artists better than most other comic book publishers. Knowing all too intimately the financial perils of freelancing, Feldstein saw to it that they got paid promptly. Whenever an artist came in to deliver a job, he also picked up a check and his next assignment.

In return Gaines kept the rights to the artwork (as did most comic book publishers). What was unusual was that Gaines also kept the artwork itself, even though it cost him money to do it. When the art overflowed the files of the old offices at 225 Lafayette, he wrapped it in brown butcher paper and stockpiled it in a vault on Second Avenue.

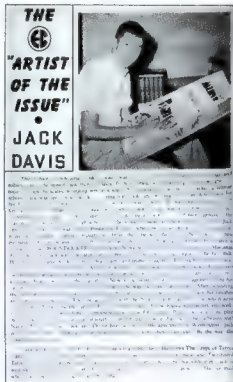
"I saved all the art. I just did it because I loved the stuff and I felt that's what you're supposed to do,"

Gaines told EC collectibles expert Grant Gussman cartoon of *Chet and Moe* in a 1990 interview. "My father didn't do that, and I was always quite angry. ...If he'd been on the ball we would have had twelve copies of *Action Comics #1* [pristine copies are now worth more than \$100,000 apiece], and I think he blew it. I was a kid when that stuff came out, but I remember they were all around the house and we used to sweep them up every once in awhile and throw 'em all away."

Respecting both the art and the storyline was yet another way that Bill Gaines was trying to escape from his father's shadow, even as he ran what had been his father's business. Although he was the founding father of the genre, comics patriarch Max Gaines had been notoriously unappreciative

of the artistic merit of the material he published. If it kept the presses running and it sold, it was good. His editor Sheldon Mayer recalled, "We slapped the books together. Max wasn't concerned with the literary or entertainment part of it. I had to argue to get him to run story strips like *Terry and the Pirates* in chronological order."

Bill's admiration for both the art and the artists led to regular "artist spotlights" in the three horror magazines. The "EC Artist of the Issue" depicted the cartoonist at his drafting table and provided a thumbnail



All EC regulars eventually were spotlighted as "artist of the issue."

biography. It was yet another means of boosting reader identification with the magazines, and the first EC Fan Addict Club was born in 1953.

EC was all by itself in this endeavor. Other publishers, who generally viewed their artists and writers as so many interchangeable parts, did not have any desire to have their readers identify with particular individuals. EC, on the other hand, wanted the fans to know each artist by name. In the Crypt

One of the reasons for the Crypt Keeper's Corner was that postal regulations required second-class mail to have a certain number of pages with nothing but print in each issue.



THE DEN OF INIQUITY!



epet's Corner, the Keeper ran a most scientific popularity poll, keeping tabs on by issue, as if the artists were races, or political candidates. From this popularity poll, however, may have sprung misconception among the readers that artists not only drew the stories but wrote them as well. Here is a sample from #228 (Feb.-Mar. '52):

Atop the Billboard by O. Henry, Joe Orlando wins first place (by a shave)! This, incidentally, wins for Joe the second place in a gag-a-poll in the month of October. Second place goes to Jack Kamen's "Hunt for the West-Coke Hawk." "Ghost of the Living Angels "Horror! Head...It Off!" takes third niche. Jack Kamen follows closely with his "Return!"

Eventually, the staff artists resorted to self-parody as the EC penchant for self-mockery began early, and the staff was perpetuated by Gaines and Feldstein on themselves. In "Horror Beneath the Streets" (*Hunt of the* #17, Sep./Oct. '50), Al lampooned both Bill and himself as they literally descended into horror—in the streets of New York. It was another demonstration of the spirit of camaraderie mixed with hijinks that existed at EC. In "Undertaking Pains" (*Tales from the Crypt* #9, Dec. '53/Jan. '54), Jack Davis caricatured Harvey Kurtzman as a murderous undertaker who generated his own clientele.

Since they were on the outside of so much of what went on in the adult world, kids loved sharing these inside jokes. These pranks in print, plus the lively give-and-take at the Crypt Keeper's Corner, reflected a capacity to laugh at oneself that foreshadowed the advent of MAD.

"Kamen's Kalamity" (*Tales from the Crypt* #31), was an EC insider spoof that showed incorrigible Mr. Nice Guy Jack Kamen finally joining his ghoulish confreres Ingels, Craig, and Davis in depravity. Feldstein and Gaines also appear in the story, which was drawn by Kamen himself.



Davis and Kurtzman shared a warm personal relationship, but Jack's caricature may be an elbow-in-the-ribs jest at Harvey's nit-picky perfectionism.

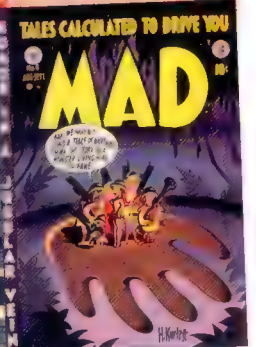
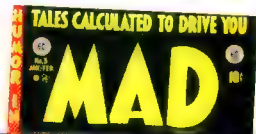
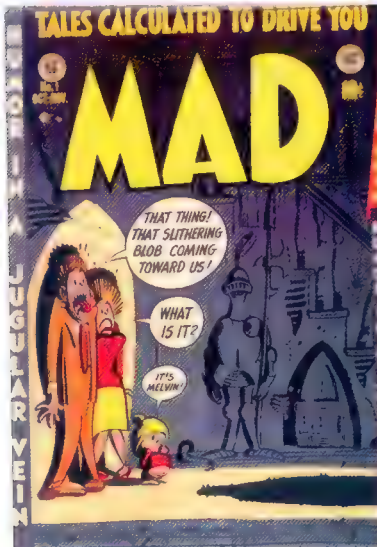
EC's MAD Magazine

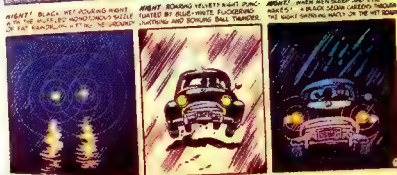
MAD was born in 1952—largely because Harvey Kurtzman needed a raise.

In the time that the perfectionist Kurtzman lovingly produced his two war comics, Feldstein was churning out seven. Because Games paid on a per-issue basis, there was a considerable disparity in their income. Increasingly, it rankled Kurtzman, who felt that his punctilious attention to detail merited further compensation. Issue-for-issue, however, Al's magazines were also bringing in substantially more money than Harvey's: Bill wasn't about to pay more for craftsmanship that wasn't helping the bottom line.

As a means of solving the dilemma, he suggested to Kurtzman that he start another magazine. That way, reasoned Gaines, his income would go up by 50 percent. *MAD* debuted in the summer

Steven Spielberg owns the original artwork for *MAD* #1.





of 1952. Originally patterned on campus humor magazines, its first targets were other comic books. To prove that buffoonery started at home, issue #1 skewered EC's own horror comics, which Kurtzman had never really cared for. (Harvey had worked on some of them, but stopped almost as soon as he began editing *Two-Fisted Tales*.) Sales of issues #1-3 were, to put it mildly, disappointing. Because he liked what Kurtzman was doing, however, Gaines was willing to stick with it for awhile, letting the profits from the horror magazines carry *MAD*, even as they carried *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*.

It soon became clear, however, that *MAD* had no need for a crutch. With Wally Wood's "Superduperman," in issue #4, sales of *MAD* began to soar. Kurtzman came up with withering parodies of some of comics' most hallowed icons—Mickey Mouse became Mickey Rodent; happy-go-lucky Archie was transmogrified into Starchie, an armed-and-dangerous juvenile delinquent; there was Woman Wonder; the Lone Stranger, Poopypey, and all the Melvins—Little Orphan Melvin, Smilin' Melvin, and Melvin of the Apes. Then he expanded into the world at large, taking on advertising, TV, movies, and one of the key underpinnings of fifties consumerism, planned obsolescence.

There was no cow too sacred for *MAD*.

Gaines and Feldstein prodded Kurtzman to broaden his targets beyond EC, first to other comics and then to the world at large. At the same time, however, Kurtzman honed his focus, taking deadly aim at a particular comic or advertisement as representative of the genre. "Superduperman and Mickey Rodent," he said, are stories that are "engraved on my memory, because they sum up what *MAD* was all about: trying to make the truth visible."

A Million Kids, a Million Flashlights, Under a Million Blankets

Tales from the Crypt and the horror magazines were a financial and cultural phenomenon. After bedtime a million kids armed with a million flashlights huddled under a million blankets, eagerly devouring each new bimonthly issue. Adolescent boys bonded over shared horror stories. As the *Crypt* Keeper had recommended, they read them aloud to one another. Copies were passed from hand to hand, if need be in secret.

Bill, Al, and new EC business manager Lyle Stuart at first tried to hide the fact that the horror comics were profitable, but the horrible truth was that they were doing fabulously well.

Issues frequently sold out; there were many letters from readers complaining that they couldn't find the magazines in the stores (they were encouraged to subscribe by mail). "Break even was 36 or 37 percent," recalls Stuart. "Our magazines were coming in at 89 percent—93 percent...even *Life* wasn't doing that well." With the cooperation of Games' distributor, Leader News, nobody outside EC knew what the real circulation numbers were; in fact many inside the EC "family" (including the artists) were kept in the dark, for about a year. After that, the news leaked out and everyone wanted a piece of the action.



The Copycat Brigade

Few of the horror knockoff comics had the sense of humor or the sense of ironic justice that made EC stories so distinctive.

Once the financial success of EC's *New Trend* was apparent, all of the other comic book publishers hurried to produce imitations. Gaines called them "the copycat brigade." The same lemmings who rushed to duplicate successful teen comics, romances, and westerns now jumped into horror, getting as close to EC titles as they dared. Avon was one of the first publishers to make the leap with *Strange Worlds* in 1950. Atlas came out with *Adventures into Terror* (formerly *Freaks*) in 1950, and *Mystic*, *Astonishing* (formerly *Marvel Boy*), and *Strange Tales* in 1951. ACG began putting out *Forbidden Worlds* in July of that same year. Harvey introduced *Witches Tales* in January 1951 and *Chamber of Chills* six months later. *Tomb of Terror* followed in 1952. Also in 1952, Fawcett debuted *Strange Stories from Another World* and *Worlds of Fear*, and Star published *Startling Terror Tales*.

In a continuation of the post office name-change follies (designed to avoid paying for a \$2,000 second-class mail permit) Star turned *Jungle Thrills* into *Terrors of the Jungle*. Ajax's *Rocketman* became *Strange Fantasy*. The word "weird" began popping up ubiquitously. There was *Weird Terror*, *Weird Thrillers*, *Weird Worlds*, *Weird Horrors*, *Weird Adventures*, *Weird Mysteries*, and *Weird Tales of the Future*.

And that was just the beginning. By 1953, approximately one quarter of the comic book industry was following Gaines into the horror field. By one estimate, there were about 150 horror titles in print. Grown-ups rather than children were in the vanguard. According to one study, 54 percent of the comic book buying public was over twenty-one, and more American adults were reading horror comics than were reading *Reader's Digest* or *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Further into Horror



I LISTEN TO MY MASTER SCREAM, JUST AS THE BOY HE
HEAT TO DEATH SCREAMED AND THE BOY'S MOTHER
HE SHOT TO DEATH SCREAMED FOR MY MASTER'S BATH
HAS BEEN FILLED WITH A CANFUL OF THE TERRIBLE
TINY, SAVAGE FLESH-EATING, PIRANHA FISH OF
THE MATTO GROSSO



AND TOWARD EVENING, ONLY A FAINT LIQUID SPLASH
REBOUNDED AGAINST THE BELL! FOR THE NEW ROYAL B.
RINGER HAD INDEED RUMB THE BELL! HE, OR WHAT'S
LEFT OF HIS BATTERED BODY, HUNG INSIDE THE BELL,
UPSIDE DOWN A BLOODSOAKED GAB TIED AROUND
HIS WASHED HEAD.



HE OPENED HIS EYES. THE FIGURE
GRINNED AT HIM. STIMULY BLOODY
THE SHINING CLEVER WEDGED
DEEP IN THE SPILL



From George Evans' oversized Whitman sampler filled with Irwin's fat wife in "An Ample Sample" (*Vault of Horror* #32) to the tub full of flesh-eating piranha fish in "The Bath" (*Tales from the Crypt* #42), an array of off-stage gore began to take center stage.

Soon the press of competition, plus the cumulative effects of writing four stories a week, began to tell on Gaines and Feldstein. The stress of daily collaboration took its toll on their relationship, and though they were still cordial, their friendship cooled. As Feldstein began pedaling faster and faster just to stay in one place, Games started to spend much more time with Lyle Stuart.

As exhaustion set in, Bill and Al began having story problems. With all the imitators, it was now much more difficult to maintain EC's quality and originality, but in his voracious reading, Games had already consumed most of the better and more obvious sources for springboards. As they reached deeper and deeper into the bottom of the springboard barrel, the stories got bloodier and bloodier. In the early stories, much of the gore took place "offstage," and more was left to the reader's imagination. With the later tales, however, the unseen terrors declined and the visible human giblet count rose markedly.

Finally Games hollered for help from outside freelance writers in the February 1954 issue of *Writer's Digest*:

We give up. For five years my editors and I have been writing an average of a comic book every six days: five a month, sixty a year. Each magazine contained four stories. That's 240 plots a year, 1200 in five years. Now we're written out. Bone dry.

Gaines went on to specify what kinds of stories he wanted from writers, and in so doing set down as good a definition of the do's and don'ts of horror, EC style as has ever been published.

His advice to writers and the content of his magazines stood in stark contrast to the guidelines his father had published by. In *Tales from the Crypt*, *Vault of Horror*, and *Haunt of Fear*, it appeared as if the rebellious Bill had methodically gone out of his way to violate his father's publishing shibboleths—and to do so in as flamboyant a manner as possible. By late 1953, he hadn't missed a one.

It took a lot of guts to illustrate my dreadtime gories, but those EC artists were just dying to do it...heh, heh, heh, heh.



A BREEZE WHIPPED THROUGH THE PINE! WARTY, NOW HOPELESSLY COVERED WITH THE FOUL-SMELLING, STRINGY OOZE, BEGAN TO SCREAM...



AN EXCRUCIATING PAIN WHIPPED THROUGH JOHNSTONE'S RIGHT ARM! THE HAND THE DEAD HAND



EEE, EEE! HE WAS A GLEYER LITTLE DEVIL! ALMOST GOT AWAY, TOO! BUT I LANDED HIM! EEE, EEE! GAVE ME A TOUGH FIGHT, THOUGH! EEE, EEE! FIFTEEN EEE, EEE YEARS.



THE THING MOVED AWKWARDLY FORWARD STUMBLING ON DECAYED LEGS COVERED WITH SLIME



SHE LOOKED UP AT WALDO WITH TEAR-FILLED EYES...

HOW DID YOU KNOW I WASN'T A VAMPIRE? THEY ALL THINK I AM.

A VAMPIRE KNOWS ANOTHER VAMPIRE.



WALDO GRINNED, REVEALING HIS NEEDLE-LIKE FANGS...

WHY DO YOU THINK I MARRIED YOU? BECAUSE I WANTED YOUR BLOOD AND NOW



Bill Gaines' Do's and Don'ts of Horror

We have no ghosts, devils, goblins, or the like.
We tolerate vampires and werewolves, if they follow tradition and behave the way respectable vampires and werewolves should.
We love walking corpse stories
We'll accept the occasional zombie or mummy.
And we relish the *contes cruels* story.

Note: *Contes cruels* are tales of sadism.



"Never show a coffin, especially with a corpse in it."



"Don't chop the limbs off anybody."



"Never show anybody stabbed or shot. Make killings in two panels: In one, the villain approaching with the weapon; In two, the villain leaving the body with the smoking gun. Never show the kill."



"No blood or bloody daggers, no skeletons or skulls."

The Gospel According to Max Gaines

In 1942, the New York World Telegram published an article about violence in comics headlined "Youngsters Want Blood, Thunder in Their Comics." After complaining that "publishers keep feeding death to the kids through villains now pictured as Nazis, Japs [sic] and sundry enemies to society," the article went on to describe the strictures that Max Gaines and Sheldon Mayer, his editor, placed on artists and writers at All-American Comics who worked on *Wonder Woman*, *Flash*, and the other superhero comic magazines.



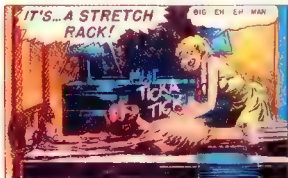
"Don't roast anybody alive."



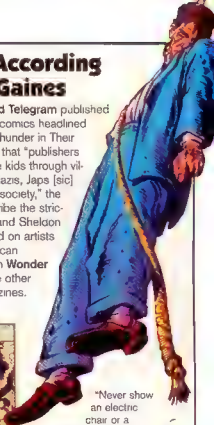
"Never show a hypodermic needle"



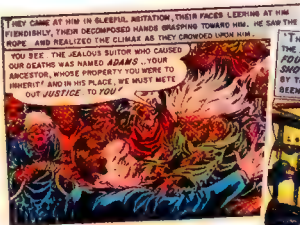
"Don't put anybody's eyes out"



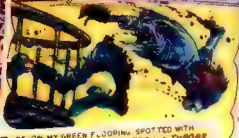
"Show no torture scenes; show no whippings."



A "can you top this?" atmosphere prevailed in the later issues of the horror titles, as can be seen in: Reed Crandall's slimy "Swamped" (*Haunt of Fear* #27), Davis' rotted sailor in "Forever Ambergis" (*Tales from the Crypt* #44), and Craig's apocalyptic ending to "Surprise Party" (*Vault of Horror* #37).



"THEY TRIED HOOKIN' THEIR GAFFS INTO HER, BUT THE TIPS CAME AWAY WITH HORRIBLE GOBS OF FOUL-SMELLING ROTTED FLESH. THEY TRIED SHOVIN' WITH THE POLES. BEN GOT CUT IN TWO BY THE RAIL, WITH NO MORE SOUND THAN IF HE'D BEEN A JELLYFISH, AS HE WENT OVERBOARD..."



When other writers were brought in to help Feldstein write horror stories in the last vein, no definitive records were kept of authorship. Jack Oleck, Carl Wessler, and Otto Binder each contributed several stories. The material was probably suggested by Gaines, Feldstein and certainly edited by Feldstein. According to John Bepson, the authorship of the 72 stories in the last six issues of the horror titles has been positively identified for all but 17 stories.

WHILE BELOW, BELOW MY GREEN FLOORING SPOTTED WITH DRIED SORE... THE QUICKSAND POOL PULSATES AND THROBS... A LIVING THING. A MASS OF RAVAGED REMAINS AND LURID WHOLFS, FUSED INTO ONE REACHING REACHING UPWARD AND OUTWARD AND AROUND MY STILT LEGS



Dead Man's Curve

Despite all the imitators, EC's horror magazines were still the top sellers. Bill Gaines now had to cope with something his father had assured him over and over would never happen—he was "amounting to something." Like the ugly duckling that turned into a swan, with the success of the *New Trend*, all those character traits that had been considered flaws and defects by his father had become strengths and advantages. Max Gaines had bequeathed Bill just enough propensity for hard bargaining to be a good contract negotiator. Everything else that was paying off—his creativity, his taste for practical jokes, his laissez faire attitude toward regular hours, his generosity with praise for the efforts of others—was unique to Bill.

Gaines, who had been troubled from time to time by nightmares about his father, was now a success because of who he was, not because of who his father had been. It was as if he had taken the keys to his dad's Hudson Hornet—without permission—souped it up, painted flames on the hood, taken it down to the strip, and gone drag racing with the big boys from uptown. When the smoke cleared, he was headed home with everyone else's pink slips in his back pocket. It was a very long way from *Bratney Bones in the Fendish* to *On a Hot Date*, but now he was selling and homey blarney had not.

A change was in the wind, however, as voices of concern began to be raised in protest to the amount of horror available on the newsstands. As 1954 dawned, Bill's *Hornet*, *Flames* and *all*, was headed for *Dead Man's Curve*.



PREMATURE DEATH OF TALES

The Gathering Storm

Even when Max Gaines was still publishing *Superman* and *Comic Eastern*, there were those who maintained that comic books were having a harmful effect on America's youth. In May of 1940 *Chicago Daily News* editor Sterling North condemned comic books as a "poisonous mushroom growth" and claimed that publishers were "guilty of a cultural slaughter of the innocents."

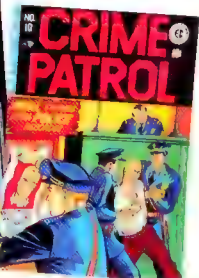
North's early crusade was interrupted by World War II. Whatever momentum he had gathered was defused by the fact that comic book publishers, Max Gaines included, enlisted their superheroes in the war against fascism. It was difficult to attack the actions of *Wonder Woman* and the *Man of Steel* without appearing to be for the Nazis and against "Truth, Justice, and the American Way." Once the war was over and the superhero vogue had passed its peak, however, public concern about the effect of comics on children resurfaced.

In a transition that echoed the rise of film noir in Hollywood, crime comics climbed to prominence with the end of the war, such that by 1948 they were at the most popular type of comic. However, the self-appointed guardians of social morality were much tougher on the comics than they were on the movies. At the same time that moviegoers flocked to see *The Big Sleep*, *Kiss Me Deadly*, and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, critics alleged that crime comics glorified villainy and violence. News stories appeared about youths who had committed violent felonies that duplicated crimes they had read about in the

comics. These accounts frequently described the young perpetrators not only as juvenile delinquents but as "comic book addicts." FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover warned that "Crime books, comics, and newspaper stories crammed with anti-social and criminal acts, the glorification of an American vigilante action, and the depiction of the criminal are extremely dangerous in the hands of the unstable child."

The foremost critic of comic books was a psychiatrist named Fredric Wertham. A senior psychiatrist for twenty years with the New York Department of Hospitals and director of the Lafargue Clinic, the first psychiatric clinic in Harlem, Wertham began hammering on comic books as early as 1948 when he realized that the reading of comic books was a common habit among his young maladjusted patients.

By attacking covers such as these, Wertham was able to rally women's groups and religious organizations, notably the Catholic Legion of Decency, to his cause.



Wertham committed one of the classic desecrations of the scientific method.

Since all his budding sociopaths read comics (even as they wore pants and drank Coca-Cola), he concluded that therefore the comics must be the cause of their deviance. He then generalized his findings to deduce that crime comics were the root cause not just of his patients' troubles, but of America's blossoming incidence of juvenile delinquency (an "increase" more supported by headlines than by statistics).

Wertham then worked overtime to sell his allegations to the public. He was nothing if not tenacious, writing articles in popular magazines, lecturing, and appearing on radio programs. With a genius for garnering headlines that predates the term "sound bite," whatever Wertham was lacking in scientific method he made up for in hucksterism and salesmanship. In a clipped Teutonic accent that would remind later generations of Peter Sellers' portrayal of apocalyptic Dr. Strangelove, he was able to generalize on a grand scale, maintaining that comic book reading was "definitely and completely

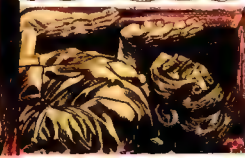
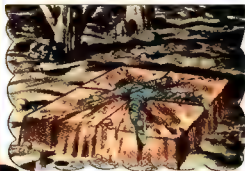
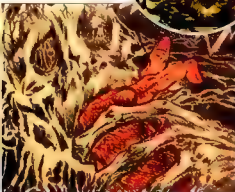
harmful and was a distinct influencing factor in every single delinquent or disturbed child we studied."

Wertham was certainly correct that horror comics wallowed in the exploitation of gore. Axe murders, electrocutions, acid baths, live burials, and worse abound in these pages. Many of the images are shocking and horrific, but often the scenes are so extreme, so "over-the-top," that the underlying graveyard humor is obvious. Wertham never dealt with the fact that the stories were almost always presented in a comedic context by both the Ghoulunatics and the publisher.

Paradoxically, he alleged that the happy, well-adjusted kids who were filling new elementary schools all over suburbia were the most at risk. Despite the fact that almost all his experience was in working with children with emotional problems, Wertham contended that it was primarily the normal child who was harmed by crime and horror comics, claiming "the most morbid children are least affected because they are wrapped up in their own fantasies."

His particular target was crime comics, but for Wertham, that covered a lot of ground. He defined "crime comics" as those dealing with "crime, murder, detailed descriptions of all kinds of felonies, torture, sadism, attempted rape, flagellation, and every imaginable kind of violence." Not surprisingly, Wertham believed that "an overwhelming majority of comic books are crime comics," and did not distinguish among westerns, detective stories, space comics, and ghost or horror stories, saying, "If a girl is raped, she's raped whether it's on a spare ship or a prairie. If a man is killed, he is killed whether on Mars or here." Even squeaky clean funny animal comics were not immune. "Ducks shoot atomic rays and threaten to kill rabbits," he complained.

Wertham identified standard but abhorrent themes that he found to be common threads running through what he defined as "crime comics." These elements included injury to the eye, blood sucking, desecration of the dead, violence against the police,



hanging, slitting victims' throats, and tying up of females. Although Wertham generally avoided singling out any comic publication by name, his allegations left little doubt that he had EC in his crosshairs.

Wertham was particularly offended by the treatment of women in comic books. He objected to the way they were portrayed "in a snuffy, unwholesome way, with emphasis on half-bare and exaggerated sex characteristics." Comics, he maintained, were "sexually aggressive in an abnormal way."

When the complaints of Wertham and others first started surfacing, comics publishers made a halfhearted attempt at self-censorship. In 1948, the Association of Comic Magazine Publishers (ACMP) went through the motions of adopting a code, but had a hard time gaining and keeping member publishers. Although EC was one of the founding members, Gaines pulled out in 1950 after Henry Schultz, the Executive Director, had denied the ACMP seal of approval to some of his publications (Amazingly, however, Schultz had okayed all of EC's work until that time.) "I used to go up to Schultz and yell and scream and pull my hair and talk him out of almost anything," Gaines recalled. "If you look at my old books with the seal on them you'll see what we could publish with the Association's approval, because Schultz was just getting a salary." Comic book publishers, as always, were guided far more by the demands of the marketplace than by the strictures of the code. By the time of the Kefauver hearings in 1954, only three comic book publishers were still members. Schultz admitted to the senators that the ACMP seal was "meaningless," and that "some pub-

lishers make up their own seals of approval and place them on their comic books.

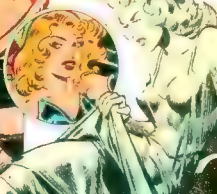
The 1954 publication of Fredric Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent* turned up the heat on the issue of comics and juvenile delinquency.

(Note the similarity between Wertham's title and Sterling North's original 1940 condemnation, "slaughter of the innocents.") From the fears of nuclear annihilation in the Cold War to advertising products that ended domestic anxiety about spotted glassware, bad breath, and waxy yellow buildup, much about the 1950s preyed on people's insecurities. The general public looked for strong, confident leadership, and in their vulnerability sometimes found demagogues instead. From FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to Senator Joseph McCarthy to Dr. Fredric Wertham, people who had the confidence of their convictions — however wrongheaded they might be — were held in esteem, at least for a time. Faith in the integrity of physicians and the infallibility of science still ran high, and the fact that Wertham contended that his conclusions were based on eight years of "scientific" clinical studies heightened alarm among insecure parents across the country. At the EC shop, Gaines and Feldstein may have been working too hard to pay much attention

In matters of sex, EC is relatively innocent of Wertham's claims.

Despite regular appearances by attractive women, there is no nudity and no sexual activity in the pages of

EC. The shapely ladies keep their clothes on (with the rare exception of a two-piece bathing suit), and a passionate embrace is the closest we get to lovemaking. These comics hardly seem to be the "sexually aggressive" publications that Wertham described



SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT

The Weird Science of Dr. Fredric Wertham



Comics historian Les Daniels reports that "research teams have yet to uncover a library copy of *Seduction* in an un mutilated condition. In every case, some of the good Doctor's carefully selected illustrations have been removed by some student of suppression who felt obliged to study it more intimately."

Seldom in contemporary history have the bizarre beliefs and quasi-scientific assertions of one twisted physician been accepted at face value by so much of the populace. Dr. Fredric Wertham was a psychiatrist with a mission. Firmly convinced that comic books were largely responsible for juvenile delinquency in America, he began a one-man crusade to eliminate them. He especially singled out horror and crime titles — the life blood and cash cow of EC Comics.

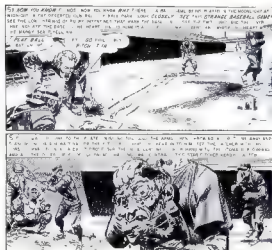
Seduction of the Innocent had a huge impact akin to Tipper Gore's attack on rap lyrics, and Senator Bob Dole's characterization of certain films as "nightmares of depravity." In one chapter entitled "I Want to Be a Sex Maniac," Wertham attempted to prove that comic books were the primary contributing factor to sexual deviance among children.

Wertham declared, "If a boy sees a girl in a comic book being whipped, and the man who does it looks very satisfied and on the last page there is an advertisement of a whip with a hard handle, surely the maximum of temptation is given to the boy at least to have fantasies about these things. . . The difference between surreptitious pornographic literature for adults and children's comic books is this: in one it is a question of attracting perverts; in the other of making them."

Wertham did not feel constrained to remain within the bounds of his area of expertise. He attacked comic books not just for their content but for their deleterious effect on children's reading habits. Wertham contended that "the balloon print pattern (in comics) makes it harder for children to learn to read from left to right." According to Maria Reidelbach in *Completely MAD*, he also found onomatopoeia harmful, and objected to such sound-effects words as "yeow, arghh, thunk, blam, glurg, and kurrack."

Wertham rejected the now commonly accepted idea that comics are modern fairy tales. He believed that crime comics, with their realistic settings and preoccupation with violent antisocial behavior, adversely affected children because they were unable to distinguish real life from the world of make-believe. On April 21, the same day that Gaines testified before the Senate subcommittee, Wertham warned the legislators, "The children see these things over and over again. They see how women are beaten up, how people are shot and killed, and finally they become, as St. Augustine said, 'unconsciously delighted.'"

This is the infamous panel of "Foul Play" (Haunt of Fear #19) in which human bones and entrails are used as sporting equipment. Drawn by Jack Davis, it was trumpeted by Wertham as emblematic of what was wrong with comic books. Wertham lifted this and other individual comic book panels out of context to "prove" his points, whether or not the story supported his allegations.



Unconsciously delighted... What big ears you have, Dr Freud. In delving into Wertham's psyche, Les Daniels in **Comix: A History of Comic Books in America**, has revealed a great deal about Wertham that leads one to suspect that Wertham himself may have derived the same "unconscious delight," the same vicarious thrill from comics that millions of other readers did, but unlike the rest of us, he believed that this titillation was sinful.

In a prior work called **The Show of Violence**, Wertham discussed a number of and cases of individuals he had examined, people who had either committed homicide before coming under his care or who did so later in life. There was a man who had strangled a ten-year-old girl, and then eaten her. When X-rayed, medical teams discovered that he had inserted a total of twenty-seven needles into his scrotum. Another fellow was a sculptor who had garroted a model and her mother, then stabbed their lodger with an ice pick. Before committing these acts, he'd half-succeeded in amputating his own genitalia.

The bizarre gruesomeness of the cases far exceeds anything in **Tales from the Crypt**. But the most important facet of **The Show of Violence** is the loving attention to detail that Wertham bestowed on these cases. He went on and on about the sculptor — for a total of 84 pages — in a way that suggests not just "unconscious delight," but perhaps "conscious delight" as well.

Calling comics "the new pornography of violence," his own fears and hang-ups are revealed in some of his more off-the-wall allegations, among them:

- Batman & Robin were a homosexual couple
- Wonder Woman was a lesbian sadist
- Ads for binoculars in comics encourage children to spy on their neighbors

At the time, however, no one was looking too closely at Wertham's own background to find the wellspring of his allegations. In a fearful and uncertain age, it was in a way comforting to parents and politicians that one single source for juvenile delinquency had been "scientifically" identified and could hence be eliminated, especially since no one was blaming **them** for the problem. Comic books were brazenly displayed on the newsstands of every drugstore and corner grocery in the country. All that had to happen was to eliminate the worst of them and clean up the rest. As Wertham said during the Kefauver hearings, "I think Hitler was a beginner compared to the comic book industry... As long as the crime comic book industry exists in its present form, no American home is safe."



Wertham claimed that children told him what the man (left) was going to do with that hot poker, and believed that kids would imitate what they read in the comics. He complained, "Children, often with comic books sticking out of their pockets, play massacre, hanging, lynching, torture."



Wertham grouched that the suggestive display of legs, thighs, and garters aroused prurient interest in children, but he also believed kids who read comics were further corrupted by bad grammar.



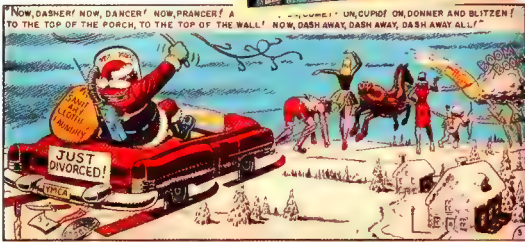
The Santa Claus Affair

The first real shot across the EC bow in the censorship battle did not come from Wertham. It came from Holyoke, Massachusetts.

In 1953, in addition to his horror duties, veritable one-man-band Al Feldstein was also editing a *MAD* clone called *Panic*. *MAD* had already spawned a host of imitators, including *Crazy*, *Unsanse*, *Whack*, and *Nuts*, put out by other publishers, so Gaines decided to jump on his own bandwagon. *MAD* was "humor in a jugular vein"; *Panic* was "humor in a varicose vein." The premier issue came out in December '53 (bearing a March '54 publication date—comics were always dated several months in advance), and had a Feldstein cover showing Santa's black boot emerging from the chimney flue, beaded straight for an industrial-strength bear trap. A leering Grinch-faced little boy peeked around the mantel, waiting for the denouement. The issue featured a Will Elder sendup of Clement Moore's old chestnut, *The Night Before Christmas*. No one messed with Moore's doggerel, but Elder's illustrations were decidedly nontraditional. Instead of visions of sug-in-plums, little tots conjured up images of Marilyn Monroe, and Jane Russell (and lifetime subscriptions to EC Comics). Dasher, Dancer, Donner, Blitzen, and the rest of Santa's reindeer appeared in various incarnations as a ballet dancer, a horse, and a sprinter. The artwork that seemed to generate the most ire was Elder's unorthodox drawing of Santa's sleigh. A sign reading "Just Divorced" dangled from the stern; a meat cleaver, a garbage can, and two daggers trailed in tow behind.

This sort of parody is the stock-in-trade of much of the contemporary Christmas greeting card industry today, but in December 1953, some of the more devout folks in Massachusetts were not amused. Where Elder and Feldstein saw the mockery of the commercialized symbol of the most sacred season in retailing, the Bay State sanctimonious bluenoses saw blasphemy and sacrilege. Commercialized or not, Santa Claus was St. Nicholas, and a religious figure was not a proper subject for ridicule. Acting on complaints from the well-connected Patrick J. McDonough of the Governor's Council, Massachusetts

With "The Night Before Christmas," Feldstein and Elder eclipsed Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* was outlawed in the city of Boston; *Panic* was banned in the entire state of Massachusetts.



Attorney General George Fingold moved to prohibit the statewide sale of *Panic* on the grounds that it "desecrated Christmas" by depicting the night before Christmas in a "pagan manner."

References to sleighs and reindeer are hard to come by in the Bible, so McDonough's outcry put Fingold on shaky theological ground.

He was on unstable legal ground as well, since the Attorney General could not ban distribution of any publication on his own say-so. Explaining that his tirade was meant to encourage voluntary compliance, Fingold then urged retailers to pull the magazine from their shelves. There was sufficient hue and cry among McDonough's supporters that distributors recalled existing copies and sent unopened batches back to New York.

To Bill Gaines, it was as if the gauntlet of censorship had been flung down right before him. Acting through his attorney, the very able Martin Scheiman, he struck back in print, telling the *New York Times* that Fingold's action was a "gross insult to the intelligence of the Massachusetts people." Scheiman offered up arguments that rang like a demented version of the courtroom scene in *Miracle on 34th Street*. "Every reasoning adult knows that there just isn't any Santa Claus," he thundered. He then alleged that Fingold's actions had inflicted "wanton damage" on Gaines, and that it was unthinkable that censors would "come to the rescue of a wholly imaginary, mythological creature rarely believed to exist by children more than a few years old." If anyone found it ironic that the Catholic McDonough and the atheist Gaines were going *mimo a mano* over Kris Kringle through two Jewish lawyers, Fingold and Scheiman, it was never mentioned in the press.

Lyle Stuart, who replaced Frank Lee as EC's business manager, suggested that Gaines retaliate by pulling all issues of *Picture Stories from the Bible* out of Massachusetts. It was a move borne of frustration, but a few days later Gaines was embarrassed by the revelation that *Picture Stories from the Bible* had not been sold anywhere in Massachusetts since 1948.

The upshot of the Santa Claus Affair in Massachusetts was a copycat wave of complaints in Manhattan, and a visit to EC

offices by the New York Police Department. The officers bought a copy of the same issue of *Panic* from the EC mailroom, then came looking for Gaines. Gaines was shaking so badly that Stuart was afraid he would not bear up well under incarceration. He squirreled Bill away in the men's room, then confronted the cops.

"Do you have to arrest the publisher, Officer?" Stuart asked. "How about taking me? I'm the business manager." After the gendarmes got the okay from headquarters (ironically it was the same precinct that had just booked mobster Frank Costello), Stuart then allowed himself to be taken into custody for selling "disgusting" literature. This time the offending work was apparently not Elder's spoof of Santa Claus, but rather a Feldstein/Davis lampoon of Mickey Spillane called *My Gun Is The Jury*. When the police realized that they hadn't actually purchased the magazine from Stuart himself, they returned to arrest the "vendor," EC's black receptionist, Shirley Norris, who walked all the way to the Elizabeth Street station, laughing and joking with the officers, before Stuart, already in custody, told her she was about to be booked.



Critics of comic books used *Panic* to "prove" their case. New York Assemblyman James A. Fitzpatrick reads aloud from the first issue at a 1954 hearing on juvenile delinquency.



STELLA MOVED, BUT I MOVED FASTER. I LET HER HAVE IT. P. 10. THE GUN. A LITTLE BELOW THE BELLY BUTTON.



The prosecutor expressed outrage at the thigh-hiked dress in Davis' Spillane spoof, but ignored the violence of the belly-button gun blast.

Stuart's arrest was no laughing matter; he faced a possible year in prison if convicted. Although Gaines remained deeply opposed to censorship throughout his life, he was concerned for the welfare of Stuart. Thus when Bill was offered a chance to resolve the case quietly in the judge's chambers, he was tempted to accept. He was forcefully dissuaded by Lyle, who said it would be the end of their friendship. "You know, Bill, if you do this," he threatened, "I'm never going to speak to you again."

Because of the gravity of the charges, Scheman went to court loaded for bear. A very fidgety NYPD officer took the stand and was compelled to identify exactly what it was that was "disgusting" about Volume 1, Number 1 of *Panic*. When the embarrassed

Despise the legal victory, the Santa Claus Affair and Stuart's arrest kicked up a lot of negative press for EC. The potshots from PTAs, church groups, mothers' clubs, and Catholic Legions of Decency continued. The New York legislature passed numerous bills outlawing horror comics, only to have Governor Thomas Dewey veto them. Dewey's popularity was not affected.

Rivalry in the comic book industry had always been fierce. Other publishers reacted to the attacks on Gaines as if just EC's end of the horror comic boat was sinking. Atlas (Marvel), and DC Comics had been trying to play catch-up with EC in the horror genre, but EC, with Feldstein's sophisticated stories and a stable of quality artists, was still the acknowledged sales leader by far.

The Secret Life of Walter Winchell



There is considerable evidence that the New York "raid" on EC offices was a put-up job engineered by gossip columnist Walter Winchell. In addition to his duties as EC business manager, Lyle Stuart also edited a monthly tabloid called

Exposé. In 1951 he'd run a story called "The Truth About Walter Winchell," which detailed the seamier side of Winchell's private life and public hypocrisy. Stuart's piece engendered a twenty-four-part series in the *New York Post* (for

which Stuart provided the sources), and which apparently prompted Winchell to suffer a nervous breakdown early in 1952. Shortly thereafter, Stuart was hired to write a book called **The Secret Life of Walter Winchell**. The gossip columnist retaliated with scathing attacks on Stuart in print. He also spread the word that friendship with Stuart would be reflected badly in Winchell's column; he was successful to the extent that Stuart found himself a pariah among many of his former friends. Winchell had good connections with the New York Police Department and, although no "smoking gun" exists as proof, it's more than likely that the raid was orchestrated at Winchell's behest as one more way of avenging himself on Stuart.



Lyle Stuart's book revealed sordid facets of Winchell's life, disclosures that may have provoked a vendetta against EC Comics.



Panic #9 (June/July '55) skewered Winchell with "Does Walter Winchell read comics?"

officer nervously singled out a drawing of a woman showing off her legs in the Spillane parody, the judge asked the cop if he'd ever seen hosiery ads in the subway. After a few more minutes of interrogation, he turned to the officer and said, "I want you to deliver a message to the police attorney. Tell him that if he ever brings a flimsy case like this before me again, I'm going to arrest him."

While Gaines and EC were taking a pounding in the media, the other comic book publishers sat on their hands, happy to see a rival brought down. Stuart recalls Gaines' description of this phenomenon. "The only way these guys are happy," Gaines had told him, "is not if they hear that a competitor is dying, but if he's dying particularly painfully."

The Kefauver Hearings



The Kefauver hearings became what Gaines called "a headline-seeking carnival" that gave "fuel to those in our society who want to tar with the censor's brush."

Connecticut Senator William Purtell called for an investigation of comic books.

His request dovetailed with the efforts of the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency and its "star," mediagenic Senator Estes Kefauver. Three years earlier, the New York hearings of Kefauver's committee investigating organized crime were broadcast "nationally"—that is, to about twenty cities in the East and Midwest. The confrontation between Kefauver and mobster Frank Costello (who would allow his hands, but not his face, to be shown) gripped the country in much the same way that the Watergate hearings did many years later. Because Costello's nervous hands and tightly clenched fingers belied the bland assurances coming out of his mouth that he was just an ordinary businessman, Kefauver emerged as a national political figure and a viable presi-

dential hopeful. Thus when hearings by Kefauver's committee investigating juvenile delinquency were scheduled for the same New York courthouse in Foley Square, it had all the makings of another media circus, especially since most of the witnesses lined up to speak were known foes of comic books. With Lyle Stuart's encouragement, Gaines volunteered to appear before the committee. After a parade of witnesses, including Fredric Wertham, had lambasted comics as a bad influence on youth, Gaines read a statement he had prepared with Stuart, then submitted to questioning from the senators and committee investigators. Bill got no support from other comic book publishers. They were more than content to leaving him twisting in the wind.



Comics were under attack at all levels of government. New York State Assemblyman James Fitzpatrick, Chairman of the State Joint Legislative Committee to Study the Publication of Comics, and New Jersey Senator Robert Hendrickson, Chairman of the Senate Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee, confront "the enemy."

Bill Gaines' Statement to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency

April 12, 1954

My name is William Gaines. I am a graduate of the School of Education of New York University. I have the qualifications to teach in secondary schools — high schools.

What then am I doing before this Committee?

I am a comic magazine publisher. My group is known as EC — Entertaining Comics. I am here as a voluntary witness. I asked for and was given this chance to be heard.

Two decades ago, my late father was instrumental in starting the comic magazine industry. He edited the first few issues of the first modern comic magazine, **Famous Funnies**.

My father was proud of the industry he helped found. He was bringing enjoyment to millions of people. The heritage he left, the vast comic book industry, employs thousands of writers, artists, engravers, printers. It has weaned hundreds of thousands of children from pictures to the printed word. It has stirred their imaginations, given them an outlet for their problems and frustrations, but most important, given them millions of hours of entertainment.

My father before me was proud of the comics he published. My father saw in the comic book a vast field for visual education. He was a pioneer. Sometimes he was ahead of his time.

He published **Picture Stories from Science**, **Picture Stories from World History**, and **Picture Stories from American History**. He published **Picture Stories from the Bible**.

Since 1942, we have sold more than five million copies of **Picture Stories from the Bible** in the United States. These copies are used widely by churches and schools to make religion interesting, more vivid, more real. **Picture Stories from the Bible** is now published throughout the world in dozens of translations. But make no mistake about it, it is nothing more and nothing less than a comic magazine.

I publish many comic magazines in addition to **Picture Stories from the Bible**.

For example, I publish horror comics. I was the first publisher in these United States to publish horror comics. I'm responsible! I started them!

Some may not like them. That's a matter of personal taste. It would be just as difficult to explain the harmless thrill of a horror story to a Dr. Wertham as it would be to explain the sublimity of love to a frigid old maid.

My father was proud of the comics he published, and I'm proud of the comics I publish. We use the best writers, the finest artists. We spare nothing to make each magazine, each story, each page, a work of art.

As a result, we have the largest percentage of sales in independent distribution.

The comic magazine is one of the few remaining pleasures that a person can buy for a dime today.

Pleasure is what we sell. Entertainment. Reading enjoyment. Entertaining reading has never harmed anyone....

Our American children are, for the most part, normal chil-

dren. They are bright children. But those who want to prohibit comic magazines seem to see instead dirty, twisted, sneaky, vicious, perverted little monsters who use the comics as blue prints for action....

What are we afraid of? Are we afraid of our own children? Do we forget that they are citizens too, and entitled to the essential freedom to read?

Or do we think our children so evil, so vicious, so single-minded, that it takes but a comic magazine story of murder to set them to murder — of robbery to set them to robbery?

[Former New York Mayor] Jimmy Walker once remarked that he never knew a girl to be ruined by a book.

And no one has ever been ruined by a comic. As has already been pointed out by previous testimony, no healthy normal child has ever been made the worse for reading comic magazines....

I do not believe that anything that has ever been written can make a child hostile, over-aggressive, or delinquent. The roots of such characteristics are much deeper.

The truth is that delinquency is a product of the real environment in which a child lives — and not of the fiction he reads.

Gaines added further remarks to his prepared testimony, a post script which not surprisingly was not picked up by the local papers.

I would like to add something based on what I have heard here today.

No one has to buy a comic book to read horror stories. Anyone, any child, any adult — can find much more extreme descriptions of violence in the daily newspaper....

In today's edition of the **Daily News** — which more children will have access to than they will to any comic magazine — there are headlines and stories like these:

WAKES TO FIND HE HAS KILLED WIFE WITH GUN

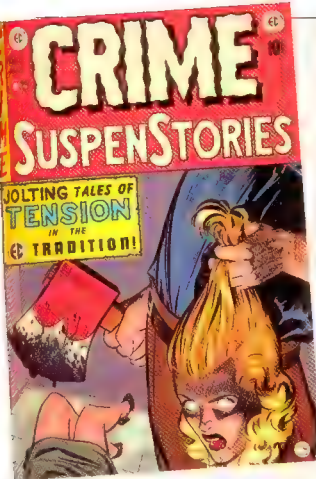
COPS PLEA IN COCKTAIL, POISONINGS — a 20 year old youth who reads poetry but not comic magazines pleaded guilty to second degree murder. He helped poison the mother and father of a friend....

I'm not saying it's wrong. But when you attack comics, when you talk about banning them as they do in some cities, you are only a step away from banning crime news in the newspapers. ...

[In America] we print our crime news. We don't think that crime news or any news should be banned because it is "bad for the children."

Once you start to censor, you must censor everything. You must censor comic books. And magazines. And radio and television and newspapers. Then you must censor what people may say.

And then you will have turned this country into a Spain [governed at that time by Fascist dictator Generalissimo Francisco Franco] or a Russia.



Kefauver vs. Gaines, or The Affair of the Severed Head

The exchange during the Foley Square hearings between Bill Gaines and presidential wannabe Senator Estes Kefauver (D-Tennessee) — with interjections by “the Herberts” (Tweedle Dum/Tweedle Dee Senate Subcommittee investigators Herbert Beaser and Herbert Hannon) — has become legendary in the annals of comic book history. It is an archetypal interchange between an advocate of free speech and a politician seeking to capitalize on the hot topic of the hour to further his own ambitions.

Mr Beaser: Is there any limit you can think of that you would not put in a magazine just because you thought a child should not see or read about it?

Mr. Gaines: No, I wouldn't say that there is any limit for the reason you outlined. My only limits are the bounds of good taste, what I consider good taste.

Mr. Gaines: Then you think a child should in any way, in any way, shape, or manner, be hurt by anything that a child reads or sees?

Mr. Gaines: I don't believe so.

Mr. Beaser: There would be no limit actually to what you put in the magazines?

Mr. Gaines: Only within the bounds of good taste.

Mr. Beaser: Your own good taste and salability?

Mr. Gaines: Yes.

Sen. Kefauver: (holding up magazine) Here is your May 22 issue. This seems to be a man with a bloody ax holding a woman's head up which has been severed from her body. Do you think that is in good taste?

Mr. Gaines: Yes, sir; I do, for the cover of a horror comic. A cover in bad taste, for example, might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the neck could be seen dripping blood from it and moving the body over a little further so that the neck of the body could be seen to be bloody. [see postscript, below]

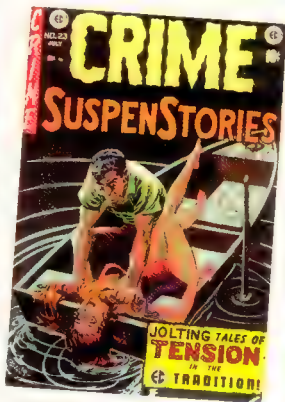
Sen. Kefauver: You have blood coming out of her mouth.

Mr. Gaines: A little.

Sen. Kefauver: Here is blood on the ax. I think most adults are shocked by that... Here is the July issue. It seems to be a man with a woman in a boat and he is choking her to death here with a crowbar. Is that in good taste?

Mr. Gaines: I think so.

Mr. Hannon: How could it be worse?



POSTSCRIPT

In one of Bill Gaines' last interviews (with Steve Ringgenberg in *Gauntlet* in 1992), Gaines revealed one small insight about the Johnny Craig severed head cover that had generated so much controversy. "What Kefauver didn't know, and I did know, was that when Craig originally brought that cover in, there was blood dripping from the neck. I myself had suggested that he raise the bottom of the cover up to cover the neck, so the neck was cut off before it was shredded. When Kefauver asked, do I think it's in bad taste, knowing what it had been originally, I said, 'No, this is in good taste.'"

Aftermath

"When Kefauver died, I said no prayers for him. I hope they have a pit in hell hot enough for him. Everybody remembers what a bastard McCarthy was, and nobody remembers what a bastard Kefauver was. Well, maybe it's just as well. Nobody should remember him."

George Evans

At EC offices, opinion was divided about how well Gaines' statements had gone over. Lyle Stuart felt he'd done just fine. "I thought he read his statement very well. He was very sincere; he thought he'd delivered a good anticensorship appeal."

Al Feldstein was somewhat more pessimistic. "Bill wasn't ready for this," he says. "He wasn't as sharp as he could have been. When they got into the issue of the ax and the severed head, Senator Kefauver really trapped him."

Gaines himself admitted that he'd been taking diet pills during the hearings, and that midway through the session they began to wear off. "Dexedrine keeps you hyper, but when it wears off it leaves you like a limp rag," Gaines told Mark Voger. "Halfway through, it wore off and I sat there like a punch-drunk fighter, getting pummeled."

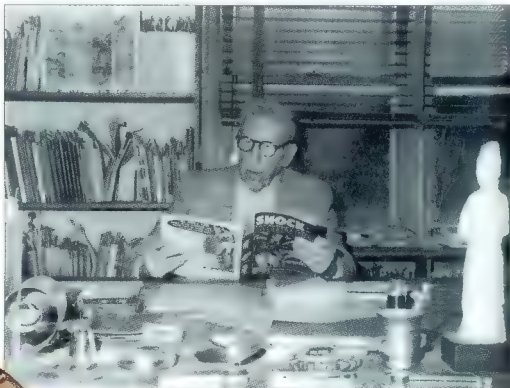
Feldstein also thinks that Gaines may have been affected by something much deeper in his personality. A piece of the rebellious little boy who defied his father, Max, never really left Bill. In the early days after he took control of EC following his father's death, he used to have nightmares. In them, Max would appear before him

and demand that his son return "his" business to its rightful owner. Feldstein believes that at the hearings, Bill may again have been troubled by visions of his father.

"I think Bill saw his father standing there talking to him, telling him what a bad boy he was for doing all those terrible things."

The televised Senate hearings demonstrated the burgeoning power of the fledgling median to shape public opinion. The press was in a frenzy and powerful forces were brought to bear on the wholesalers who were distributing comic books. Protests and boycotts were staged across the country, and grandstanding politicians jumped on the bandwagon. There were public burnings of comic books, which reminded many of Nazi book bonfires before the Second World War. Municipalities were attempting to ban sales of crime and horror comics. Even New York's mayor Robert Wagner asked his DAS to ban them under obscenity laws. As Gaines had foreseen, however, some officials were reluctant, fearing that the works of Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe would be outlawed together with *Tales from the Crypt*.

And whatever happened to Fredric Wertham? He spent his declining years denying that his work had been the impetus for the decline of comic books. "I've got a delightful picture of him reading a copy of *Shock SuspenStories*," chortled Gaines in one of his last interviews. "When he died, it went up on the wall at *MAD*."



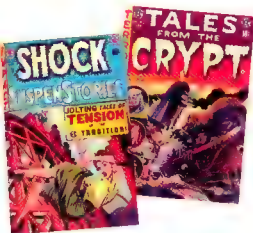
Through it all, bundles of EC comics were being returned to the office, unopened. Gaines was having trouble finding wholesalers who would carry them.

Gaines had always believed that the horror genre, like the superhero genre before it, would die of natural causes, declining in popularity as kids moved onto the next new craze. It was not to be. *Tales from the Crypt* and its siblings had become the lightning rod for the entire comic book industry. At social events, Orlando, Davis, Craig, and many of the other artists began describing themselves as "commercial illustrators."



Judge Charles Murphy, with "before" unsavory comic and new improved "after" version Murphy wielded a \$100,000 budget and took his mandate to "clean up" comics seriously.

EC comics had literally become too hot to handle.



In 1954, confessing that one drew horror comics for a living was only marginally more socially acceptable than confessing that one was a Communist or a full-time pornographer.

Realizing that his business was on the line, Gaines tried to rouse his fellow publishers to defend their medium. In an effort to quell the storm, Gaines proposed a new comic publishers association to fight censorship. It was his intention that they fund an independent study conducted by educators and psychologists to determine once and for all whether there really was any connection between comics and delinquency. He was also prepared to propose a concerted public relations counterattack to reassure parents that comics were not harmful to their children.



The New Association and the New Comic Code

Representatives of eight other publishing houses showed up at the meeting Gaines called, and the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) was formed. As their first act they banned the use of the words "crime," "horror," and "terror" in comics. Even "weird" got the ax. "This isn't what I had in mind," said Gaines, as he turned on his heel and stomped out of the meeting.

John Goldwater, the publisher of *Archie* comics, became CMAA president, a sinecure he held for the next twenty-five years. Jack Liebowitz of DC Comics, Max Gaines' former partner-cum-adversary, became vice president. Shortly thereafter, the CMAA instituted a censorship process that required a seal of approval for all comics before distribution. At Goldwater's suggestion, the publishers recycled former ACMP legal counsel Henry Schultz to draft a Code of Ethics. Those complying with the code would receive the CMAA seal of approval. Both advertising and editorial matter were to be subjected to scrutiny by the censors. The Code forbade "all scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, and masochism," as well as the "walking dead, torture, vampires, ghouls, cannibalism and werewolfism." Judge Charles F. Murphy became the first Code Administrator—in effect the comics czar. Murphy was not the first choice. The czar's chair was initially offered to Fredric Wertham.

Bowing to the Inevitable

Gaines was disgusted and his business was in ruins. On September 14, 1954, he reluctantly announced that he would cease publication of his five horror and crime comics.

Gaines' disillusionment with the new CMAA was complete when he realized that there was a double standard (and not inconsiderable double-dealing) involved. It had been clear when the CMAA was founded and the Code was established that all crime and horror would be *verboten*. However, the Code as adopted permitted the word



"crime" in a comic title, provided that the word was used "with restraint." Gaines pulled out of the CMAA as he had from the ACMP, its predecessor.

"Naturally, with comic magazine censorship now a fact, we at EC look forward to an immediate drop in the crime and juvenile delinquency rate in the United States. We trust there will be fewer robberies, fewer murders, and fewer rapes!"

— Bill Gaines

The New Direction

To save his company, Gaines had killed off his favorite "children," his horror comics. In their stead he and Feldstein developed a new "clean, clean" line. EC's *New Direction* comics, including *Aces High*, *Impact*, *Piracy*, *Valor*, *Extra!*, MD, and *Psychoanalysis*, debuted in January 1955. Even though Gaines was no longer a CMAA member, the comics met the letter of the code. However, because these comics did not carry the CMAA seal, they too were returned unopened by the distributors.

With revenues plummeting, Gaines was forced by economic necessity to swallow his pride and rejoin the CMAA. Gaines stayed with the CMAA for about ten months, reluctantly submitting his publications to Murphy and his staff. He didn't have a great deal of respect for the CMAA or the people who ran it, and his contempt for the process was more than likely ill-disguised. "This is what our forefathers came to America to escape," he wrote to his distributors. His position did not waver over time.

"I've never believed in any kind of censorship against anything in any way for anybody nohow,"

he told Steve Ringgenberg in a 1992 *Gaudet* interview. "The Comics Code group was run by three or four old ladies who were shocked by almost anything," he continued. "Murphy headed it, but I don't think he read anything. 'This staff of old ladies read everything and it wasn't hard to shock them.'"

During the months that Gaines tried to behave himself and remain in the CMAA, Judge Murphy's "little old ladies" eviscerated every EC story they scrutinized. Even with the censor's seal, however, unopened bundles of *New Direction* comics were still being returned. It was apparent that EC was being blackballed by the rest of the comic book industry. With the Code seal or without it, *Aces High*, *Piracy*, *Valor*, *Extra!*, MD, and *Psychoanalysis* lumbered toward failure throughout 1955. They failed in part not because readers rejected them but because the EC boycott was so pervasive that they were never given a fair chance to hold their own in the marketplace.





code. "Those of us in the industry saw these trends—both the publication of the offensive comic books and the reaction—as a threat to everything we had worked so hard to create. Lord knows the themes and content of these comics were totally antithetical to the themes and content of the *Archie* series. ...We had certain moral obligations to guarantee that 'comic books are reasonably acceptable to reasonable people.' ...I doubt that we could have made a finer choice than that of Judge Charles F. Murphy [as Code Administrator]. He performed an outstanding service to all parties concerned with comic magazines...."

"A threat to everything...totally antithetical...moral obligations to guarantee that 'comic books are reasonably acceptable to reasonable people'..." Goldwater's words were all but a declaration of war on everything that Gaines stood for. Virtually from that point forward, every contract Gaines entered into had a clause custom-designed for him by his attorneys, Marty Schennan and Jack Albert, "This agreement is not subject to the criterion of reasonableness." Henceforth from a legal standpoint Gaines could be as crazy as he wanted to and get away with it—it was right there in black and white.

Editorial statement which appeared in the last issue of the five horror and crime comic titles

HORROR COMICS: IN MEMORIAM

You may never read this magazine. For that matter, this magazine may never be printed. If it is printed, it may never be distributed. If it is distributed, it may be kept in a bundle behind the counter and never see the light of day. But if, through some miracle, it **does** reach the newsstand, this will probably be the last issue of this magazine you will ever read.

As a result of the hysterical, injudicious, and unfounded charges leveled at crime and horror comics, many retailers and wholesalers throughout the country have been intimidated into refusing to handle this type of magazine.

Although we at EC still believe, as we have in the past, that the charges against horror and crime comics are utter nonsense, there's no point in going into a defense of this kind of literature at the present time. Economically our situation is acute. Magazines that do not get onto the newsstand do not sell. We are forced to capitulate. **We give up. WE'VE HAD IT!**

Naturally, with comic magazine censorship now a fact, we at EC look forward to an immediate drop in the crime and juvenile delinquency rate of the United States. We trust there will be fewer robberies, fewer murders, and fewer rapes!

We would like to say in passing, passing away that is!.. that if you have enjoyed reading EC's horror and crime efforts over the past five years half as much as we have truly enjoyed creating them for you, then our labors of love have not been in vain.

But enough mush! This is not only an obituary notice; it is a birth announcement!
BOY. WHAT WE GOT IN STORE FOR YOU! (Ya didn't think EC was gonna die with the books did ya? We got talent we ain't even used yet!)

EC is planning the **NEW NEW TREND**. In January of 1955, we hit! In fact, we hit with five (5) sensational new titles. They won't be horror magazines. they won't be crime magazines! They'll be utterly new and different—but in the old reliable EC tradition! Naturally, we can't tell you what they'll be YET—we can feel the hot breath of our floundering competitors who followed us into horror on our necks. When the mags are ready to go, they'll be announced in **MAD, PANIC, WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY, PIRACY, and TWO-FISTED TALES!**

We feel it's gonna be a **HAPPY NEW YEAR** with our **NEW NEW TREND!**

Your grateful editors

And Then There Was One

With the failure of Gaines' *New Direction*, the world had finally been made safe for *Archie*. There was only one profitable piece of Gaines' empire still standing: *MAD* magazine.



CORPSES & COVERS

Covers sell comics. News racks were overflowing with comic books in the early 1950s, and it took a strong graphic image to make a comic grab a kid's attention amidst the jumble of competing titles. A cover had to stand alone, usually without caption, sort of a mute single-frame snapshot of one of the stories in the issue.

At EC, the cover artwork was not necessarily drawn by the same artist who drew the story inside the comic. Thus fans were sometimes treated to different visions of the same tales. On the cover of *Shock SuspenStories* #13, Jack Kamen captured the frozen terror of a young woman thrown from a roller coaster who has not yet hit the ground, but science fiction master Frank Frazetta drew the story, "Squeeze Play." Wally Wood showed the shocked reaction of spectators to a guillotine in action on the cover of *Tales from the Crypt* #27. The story, entitled "Horror! Head...It Off!" was drawn by Ghastly Graham Ingels.

Jack Davis' covers had a funhouse macabre feeling to them, a grisly glee that was perfectly attuned to the mood set by the GhouLunatics. Al Feldstein said he "never really cared" for own artwork, but thought it "worked pretty well on covers," which is quite an understatement. With great economy of style, he repeatedly came up with dramatic cover images that are still riveting today.

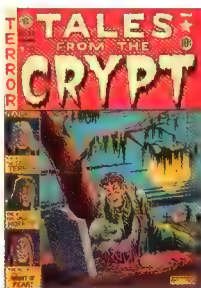
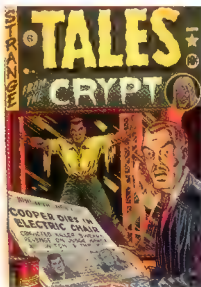
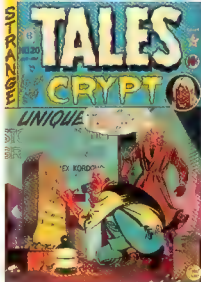
These freeze frames often convey horror, not at what has already happened, but helplessness at what is about to occur. Alternatively, they show clandestine activity observed, a secret as yet unrevealed. These kinds of drawings were what made readers plunk down their dimes for EC comics because they couldn't wait to see what happened next.

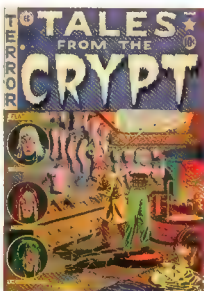
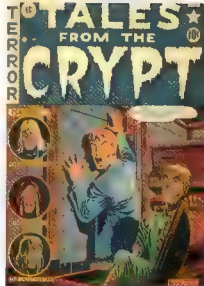


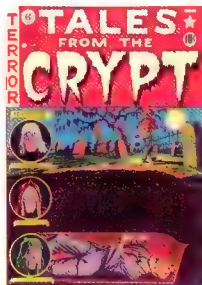
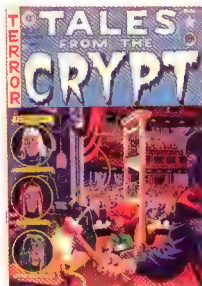
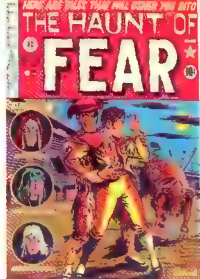
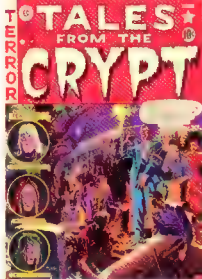
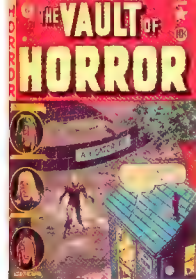


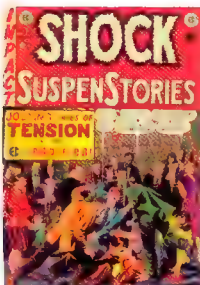
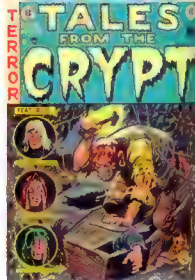
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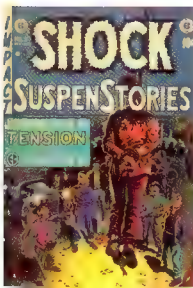
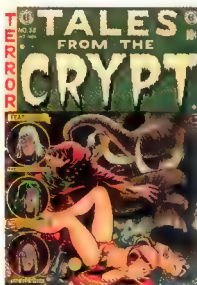
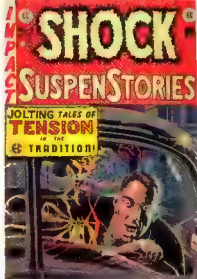
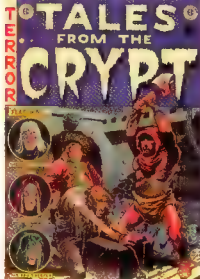


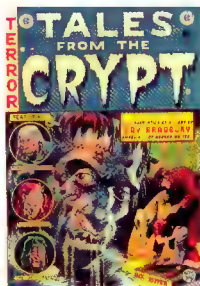




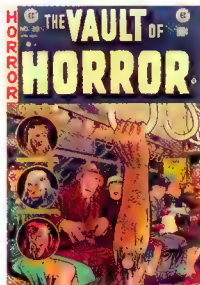


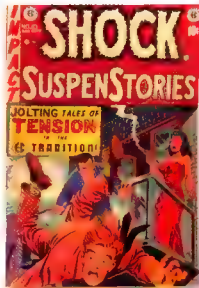
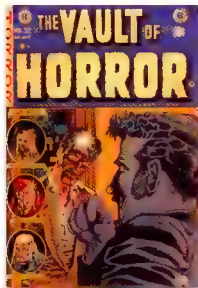
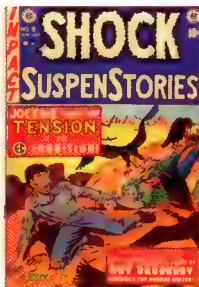
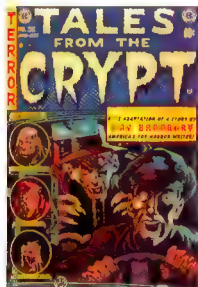




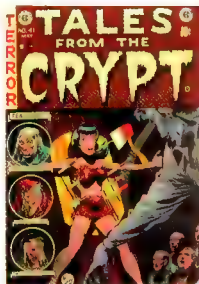


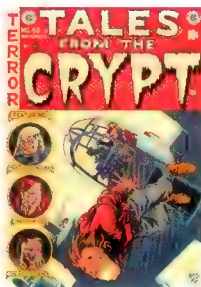
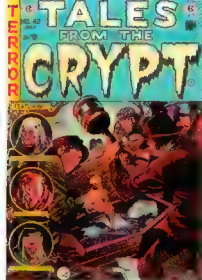
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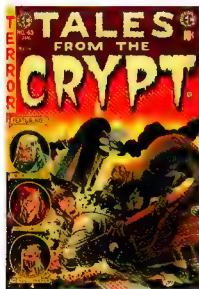
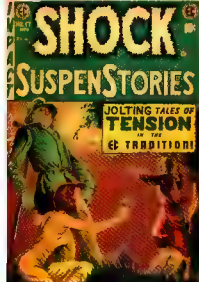












EC published three volumes of collected favorites entitled *Tales of Terror*.



FOUR FOUL TALES

Whether it is for their artwork or their storyline, many stories in EC's *New Trend* are considered "classics." The four included in this section all display a strong story mixed with dynamic illustration, plus a little something extra that enhances their historic interest.

"Lower Berth," the tongue-in-cheek tale of the origin of the Crypt Keeper, is an excellent example of the synergy between Feldstein's stories and Jack Davis' masterful illustration (*Tales from the Crypt* #33). The story culminates in the birth of the infant Crypt Keeper.

When the crush of his editorial and writing duties started to overwhelm him, Al Feldstein reluctantly retired from illustrating stories.

"The Thing from the Grave" (*Tales from the Crypt* #22), is an early Feldstein story from the sixth issue of *Tales* (and the first to use all three GhouLunatics on the cover). It reveals his exemplary use of stark contrast between light and shadow, and highlights his ability to render a moment of horror frozen in time.

"Horror We? How's Bayou?," illustrated by "Ghastly" Graham Ingels, is the quintessential "dripping" story (*Haunt of Fear* #17), and a long-time favorite of EC Fan-Addicts. (Attendees at the 1972 Convention voted it best horror artwork in an individual story.) The title confuses many, especially those who are unaware that it spoofs "How's by you?", a vintage New York salutation.

In "The October Game," Jack Kamen illustrated one of Feldstein's finest adaptations of a Ray Bradbury story (*Shock SuspenStories* #9). Kamen captured the mood flawlessly, with its innocent spooky Halloween patina overlaid on a deadly tale of marital discord and retribution. "The October Game" also accentuates Kamen's prowess at portraying horror without gore or bloodshed, a powerful skill that became his trademark.





TALES



ISS. 3
DEC.-JAN

10¢

FROM THE

CRYPT

FEATURING



THE CRYPT MAN



THE VAULT KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



ENOCH

JACK DAVIS

ARE YOU A RED DUPE?

IN THE TOWN OF GAZOOSKY IN THE HEART OF SOVIET RUSSIA, YOUNG MELVIN BUZUNKEN - SKOVITCHSKY PUBLISHED A **COMIC MAGAZINE**.



...SO THEY CAME AND **SMASHED** HIS FOUR CO. OR PRESS



.. AND **HUNG** POOR MELVIN THE NEXT MORN'NG!



- HERE IN AMERICA, WE CAN **STILL** PUBLISH COMIC MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, SLICKS, BOOKS AND THE BIBLE. WE DON'T **HAVE** TO SEND THEM TO A CENSOR FIRST. NOT **YET**...
- BUT THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN AMERICA WHO WOULD **LIKE** TO CENSOR.. WHO WOULD **LIKE** TO SUPPRESS COMICS. IT ISN'T THAT THEY DON'T LIKE COMICS FOR **THEM**! THEY DON'T LIKE THEM FOR **YOU**!
- THESE PEOPLE SAY THAT **COMIC BOOKS** AREN'T AS GOOD FOR CHILDREN AS **NO** COMIC BOOKS, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE NO-GOODS. SOME ARE DO-GOODERS. SOME ARE WELL-MEANING, AND SOME ARE JUST PLAIN MEAN.
- BUT WE ARE CONCERNED WITH AN AMAZING REVELATION. AFTER MUCH SEARCHING OF NEWSPAPER FILES, WE'VE MADE AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY:

THE GROUP MOST ANXIOUS TO DESTROY COMICS ARE THE COMMUNISTS!

- WE'RE SERIOUS! NO KIDDIN'! **HERE! READ THIS:**

THE [COMMUNIST] "DAILY WORKER" OF JULY 13, 1953 BITTERLY ATTACKED THE ROLE OF:

"...SO-CALLED 'COMICS' IN BRUTALIZING AMERICAN YOUTH, THE BETTER TO PREPARE THEM FOR MILITARY SERVICE IN IMPLEMENTING OUR GOVERNMENT'S AIMS OF WORLD DOMINATION, AND TO ACCEPT THE ATROCITIES NOW BEING PERPETRATED BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN IN KOREA UNDER THE FLAG OF THE UNITED NATIONS."

THIS ARTICLE ALSO QUOTED GERSHON LEGMAN (WHO CLAIMS TO BE A GHOST WRITER FOR DR. FREDERICK WERTHAM, THE AUTHOR OF A RECENT SHEEN AGAINST COMICS PUBLISHED IN "THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL"). THIS SAME G. LEGMAN, IN ISSUE # 3 OF "NEUROTICA," PUBLISHED IN AUTUMN 1948, HILDEY CONDEMNED COMICS, ALTHOUGH ADMITTING THAT:

"THE CHILD'S NATURAL CHARACTER... MUST BE DISTORTED TO FIT CIVILIZATION... FANTASY VIOLENCE WILL PARALYZE HIS RESISTANCE, DIVERT HIS AGGRESSION TO UNREAL ENEMIES AND FRUSTRATIONS, AND IN THIS WAY PREVENT HIM FROM REBELLING AGAINST PARENTS AND TEACHERS... THIS WILL SIPHON OFF HIS RESISTANCE AGAINST SOCIETY, AND PREVENT REVOLUTION."

- SO THE **NEXT** TIME SOME JOKER GETS UP AT A P.T.A. MEETING, OR STARTS JABBERING ABOUT THE "NAUGHTY COMIC BOOKS" AT YOUR LOCAL CANDY STORE, GIVE HIM THE **ONCE-OVER**. WE'RE NOT SAYING HE **IS** A COMMUNIST! HE MAY BE INNOCENT OF THE WHOLE THING! HE MAY BE A **DUPE**! HE MAY NOT EVEN **READ** THE "DAILY WORKER"! IT'S JUST THAT HE'S **SWALLOWED** THE **RED BAIT... HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER!**

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! GOT A **COLLECTORS' ITEM** FOR YOU FIENDS! GOT A **REAL GREAT CHILLER-DILLER!** GIVE THE MAN YOUR **GRIMY LITTLE DIME** IF YOU HAVEN'T **DONE SO ALREADY,** AND COME INTO THE **CRYPT OF TERROR!** THIS IS THE **CRYPT-KEEPER,** READY WITH ANOTHER OF MY **TALES OF HORROR!** SO SIT DOWN ON THE **TANBARK FLOOR,** AND I'LL BEGIN THE **BLOOD-CURDLING YARN** I CALL...

LOWER BERTH!

TALES
FROM
THE
CRYPT

JACK
DAVIS

10c

LONG BEFORE THE ADVENT OF RADIO, MOVIES, TELEVISION AND COMIC BOOKS, THE ONLY ENTERTAINMENT FOLKS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY ENJOYED WERE THE TRAVELING CARNIVALS, WHICH SET UP THEIR GAILY COLORED TENTS ON VACANT TRACTS OF LAND AT THE OUTSKIRTS OF THEIR TOWNS! ABOUT 80 YEARS AGO, ONE OF THESE CARNIVALS CAME TO A SMALL TOWN IN THE OZARK MOUNTAINS...

RIGHT THIS WAY, FOLKS!
SEE THE **SIDE-SHOW!** SEE
THE **GREATEST COLLECTION**
OF **ODDITIES EVER TO BE**
ASSEMBLED UNDER ONE
TENT! RIGHT THIS WAY,
FOLKS!

THE SIDE SHOW OF THIS PARTICULAR CARNIVAL WAS OWNED BY A MAN NAMED ERNEST FEELEY! PATIENTLY, OVER THE YEARS, HE HAD ASSEMBLED A FABULOUS COLLECTION OF ODDITIES AND FREAKS! HE HAD THE USUAL ATTRACTIONS...

SEE FANNY, THE FAT LADY, FOLKS! FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY POUNDS OF FEMALE PULCHRITUDE! SEE HADNAR, THE SWORD-SWALLOWER... SKULL-FACE, THE LIVING SKELETON... FEGO, THE FIRE-EATER...



BUT ERNEST FEELEY HAD ONE SPECIAL 'HEAD-LINE' ATTRACTION. THAT NEVER FAILED TO DRAW THE CROWDS... TO SEPARATE THE CURIOUS FROM THEIR QUARTERS...

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, FOLKS.. THE STAR ATTRACTION OF FEELEY'S SIDE-SHOW... THE MOST UNUSUAL ODDITY EVER TO BE PUT ON DISPLAY ANYWHERE ANYTIME! INSIDE... IN ITS ORIGINAL SARCOPHAGUS... IS MYRNA, THE ONLY FEMALE EGYPTIAN MUMMY IN EXISTENCE! TWENTY-FIVE CENTS, FOLKS! RIGHT THIS WAY.



MYRNA, THE EGYPTIAN MUMMY, WAS OWNED BY ZACHARY CLING, A RETIRED ARCHEOLOGIST! ERNEST FEELEY PAID ZACHARY CLING A VERY LARGE SALARY FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF EXHIBITING MYRNA...

...AND NOW, FOLKS... IF YOU WILL STEP THIS WAY... DOCTOR CLING, WHO FOUND MYRNA THE EGYPTIAN MUMMY, WILL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT HER AND SHOW HER TO YOU...



FIVE TIMES A DAY, ZACHARY CLING WOULD NARRATE HOW HE DISCOVERED MYRNA, AND THEN SHOW HER TO THE GAPING CUSTOMERS! HE'D EVEN UNDO PART OF HER WRAPPINGS...

MYRNA, THE ONLY FEMALE EGYPTIAN MUMMY IN AMERICA WAS FOUND IN THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS BY MY EXPEDITION! HER TOMB WAS DEEP IN THE CLIFFS THAT TOWER OVER THE NILE RIVER



'ON THE TOMB WALLS, WE FOUND THE INSCRIPTIONS DESCRIBING HER INCARCERATION! IT SEEMS THAT MYRNA, OR MYRANAH, AS THE EGYPTIANS CALLED HER, WAS A LADY-IN-WAITING TO THE PHARAOH'S WIFE...

BRING ME MY PERFUME, MYRANAH! YES, MISTRESS!



'MYRANAH WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL, AND SOON CAUGHT THE PHARAOH'S FANCY! BUT LOYAL MYRANAH, FAITHFUL TO HER MISTRESS, REPELLED THE PHARAOH'S ADVANCES

DO NOT STRUGGLE. MY PET! I AM YOUR KING! YOU MUST DO AS I WISH!

NO! NO! I WILL NOT! NEVER! NEVER!



'THE PHARAOH, IN ANGER, ORDERED THAT SHE BE BURIED ALIVE AS PUNISHMENT! MYRANAH WAS FORCIBLY WRAPPED IN THE CEREMONIAL BURIAL WINDINGS

SHE FIGHTS LIKE A CAT, SIRE!

SHE WILL FIGHT NO MORE! HURRY!

EEE MNNNN!

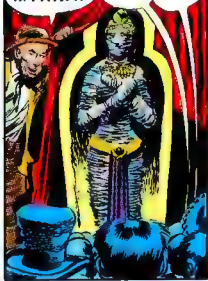


AND SO, FOR FOUR THOUSAND YEARS, THIS POOR GIRL LAY IN HER TOMB UNTIL I UNCOVERED HER! AND NOW... I GIVE YOU.



MYRNA!

GASP! GHOKE!



THE MUMMIFIED BODY OF THE UNFORTUNATE SERVANT GIRL STOOD IN ITS SARCOPHAGUS, ITS ARMS FOLDED ACROSS ITS CHEST! THE CARNIVAL CUSTOMERS NEVER FAILED TO GASP AND SCREAM WHENEVER DOCTOR CLING WOULD UNCOVER IT...

AND NOW... I WILL REMOVE SOME OF THE WRAPPINGS!



IF THE SIGHT OF THE MUMMY WAS REVOLTING, HER UNWRAPPED FACE WAS EVEN MORE SO! THE WRINKLED DRIED FLESH CLUNG TO HER SKULL LIKE WET TISSUE PAPER! HER EYES HAD RECEDED DEEP INTO THEIR SOCKETS! LIPS WERE DRAWN TIGHTLY BACK IN A LEERING GRIN! SOME CRIED OUT... SOME TURNED AWAY.



GOOD LORD!

BUT THERE WERE ALWAYS MORE THE NEXT NIGHT! MORE OF THE CURIOUS! WORD TRAVELED FAST IN SMALL TOWNS! THEY FLOCKED TO SEE MYRNA... SHE WELL EARNED HER KEEP! ERNEST FEELEY PAID ZACHARY GLING HIS SALARY HAPPILY! AND THEN, WHEN THE CARNIVAL HIT THAT SMALL OZARK TOWN...

YOU MR FEELEY? MY NAME'S JEB SICKLES! I UNNERSTAN' YOU OWN THIS HERE SIDE-SHOW, MR. FEELEY! I THINK MEBBE YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN WHAT I GOT!

WHAT'S THAT, MR. SICKLES?



I'M THE DOG 'ROUND THESE PARTS, MR. FEELEY! AIN'T GOT NO LICENCE OR NUTHIN', BUT FOLKS LIKE WHAT I DO FOR 'EM SO THEY COME T'ME! 'BOUT TWO YEARS AGO, THIS HERE CRONE CAME DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAINS! I'D NEVER LAID EYES ON 'ER B'FORE! SHE BEGGED ME T'COME BACK WITH HER...

LOOK, MR. SICKLES! I'M A BUSY MAN.' GET TO THE POINT! WHAT IS IT YOU'VE GOT THAT I'D BE INTERESTED IN?



I'LL GET TO IT, MR. FEELEY! TAKE IT EASY! ANYWAY, THIS OLD CRONE BEGGED ME SO BAD I WENT! SHE TOL' ME HER SON WAS SICK... TERRIBLE SICK! SHE SAID HE WAS A-DYIN'! SHE TOOK ME UP INTO THE MOUNTAINS TO THIS HERE CAVE! I NEARLY THROW'D UP AT WHAT I SAW!

WHAT WAS IT, MR. SICKLES?



IT WAR HER SON, MR. FEELEY!
HER SON HAD TWO HEADS! IT WAS
HORRIBLE...

CHOKE!

KIN YUH...
KIN YUH DO
ANYTHING
FOR ENOCH?

'HE WAS TOO FAR GONE FOR ME
T' SAVE! HE DIED 'BOUT AN HOUR
AFTER WE GOT T' THE CAVE.

I'M SORRY, MA'AM!
I DONE ALL I
COULD! ENOCH
IS DEAD!

TAKE 'IM
AWAY! TAKE
'IM... SOB...
OUT OF MY
SIGHT!

WE MUSTA BEEN TWENNY-
TWO, MR. FEELEY! I TOOK
HIS BODY BACK DOWN
THE MOUNTAIN AND PUT
IT IN A MOONSHINE
STILL! I DIDN'T
WAN' NOBODY T'
SEE IT!

AND
YOU
STILL
HAVE IT
THE TWO-
HEADED
BODY?

IT'S BEEN IN THE STILL
FOR TWO YEARS, MR.
FEELEY! THE MOONSHINE
SEEMS T' HAVE PRESERVED
IT! YOU...

TAKE ME TO IT!
QUICKLY!

MR. FEELEY AND THE QUACK DOCTOR PUSHED THEIR
WAY THROUGH THE CROWD OGGLING AT MYRNA, THE
MUMMY! OUTSIDE THE CARNIVAL GROUNDS, A HORSE AND
WAGON WAITED! THEY DROVE TO A HIDDEN STILL...

THAR SHE
IS, MR.
FEELEY!

C'MON!

THE LIGHT FROM THE LANTERN CAST AN ORANGE GLOW
INTO THE HUGE WOODEN STILL-VAT! BELOW THE SUR-
FACE OF THE MOONSHINE, THE PULPY WHITE FACES
OF THE TWO-HEADED CORPSE STARED UP AT ERNEST
FEELEY...

THAT'S HIM...

GULP!

ERNEST TURNED TO JEB SICKLES... HIS EYES WIDE HIS
FACE FLUSHED...

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN
MY SHOW, JEB? DO WHAT OLD
DOC CLING DOES! EXHIBIT
THIS HERE ENOCH! TELL HOW
YOU GOT HIM! I'LL PAY YOU
A GOOD SALARY!

JOIN UP WITH
YOU FELLERS,
EH? WAL, I
DUNNO! I I
GUESS I'D
LIKE THAT!

SO, JEB SICKLES TOOK HIS TWO-HEADED PRESERVED BODY OUT OF THE STILL AND JOINED ERNEST FEELEY'S SIDE-SHOW! ENOCH WAS PLACED IN A SPECIALLY MADE GLASS TANK FILLED WITH FORMAL-DEHYDE, AND PUT ON EXHIBIT...

AND NOW FOLKS, I GIVE YOU DOCTOR JEBSON SICKLES... AND ENOCH!

FOLKS! I DISCOVERED ENOCH IN THE CAVE OF AN OLD MOUNTAIN CRONE BACK IN THE OZARKS! HE DIED IN MY ARMS...

WHEN JEB DREW BACK THE CURTAIN REVEALING THE PASTY-SKINNED BLOATED TWO-HEADED CORPSE OF ENOCH, THE SIDE-SHOW CUSTOMERS WOULD GRINCE AND SHUDDER IN REVULSION...

AND NOW, I GIVE YOU... ENOCH! THE TWO-HEADED MAN!

CHOKES! GULP!

COUGH!

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR ERNEST FEELEY TO REALIZE THAT THE THING IN THE HUGE GLASS TANK WAS AREALLY VALUABLE EXHIBIT AND DESERVED STAR BILLING, LIKE MYRNA...

THAT'S RIGHT, JEB! I'M MOVIN' YOU UP TO STAR ATTRACTION! YOU'LL SHARE IT WITH DOG CLING, HERE!

THANKS, HUMPH MR. FEELEY!

SO ENOCH WAS PLACED OPPOSITE MYRNA... AND FIVE TIMES A DAY, JEB SICKLES AND ZACH CLING EXHIBITED THEIR ODDITIES TO THE CURIOUS WHO'D PAID THEIR QUARTERS TO SEE THEM.

MYRNA.

... ENOCH...

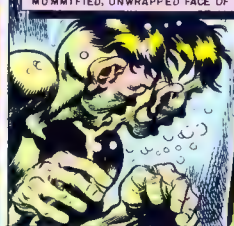
FIVE TIMES A DAY, MYRNA'S ROTTED BROWN WRAPPINGS WERE REMOVED FROM HER MUMMIFIED FACE...

GASP...

CHOKES.

AND FIVE TIMES A DAY, THE CURTAIN HIDING ENOCH'S TANK WAS WITHDRAWN REVEALING THE TWISTING, TURNING PRESERVED CORPSE...

AND FIVE TIMES A DAY, AS THE CROWD OGLED AND GASPED... PASTY-SKINNED, TWO-HEADED ENOCH, FLOATING IN HIS FORMAL-DEHYDE WORLD, STARED WITH GLAZED EYES AT THE PUTRID, MUMMIFIED, UNWRAPPED FACE OF MYRNA THE MUMMY...



THE CARNIVAL MOVED ON FROM TOWN TO TOWN...THE CROWDS FLOCKED TO SEE ENOCH AND MYRNA! AND JEALOUSY BETWEEN ZACH CLING AND JEB SICKLES FLAMED...

WHAT'D YOU MEAN YOU'RE CUTTING MY SALARY? IF IT WASN'T FOR MYRNA...

ENOCH PULLS 'EM IN TOO, ZACH! I'VE BEEN UNDERPAYING JEB! HE AND YOU GET THE SAME FROM NOW ON! I'M LOWERIN' YOUR PAY, AND RAISIN' HIS!



THE BLOATED BODY WITH THE STARING PAIRS OF EYES SWAYED IN THE FORMALDEHYDE! THE DRIED REMAINS IN THE ROTTED WRAPPINGS STOOD SILENTLY! FIVE TIMES A DAY THEY GAZED UPON EACH OTHER...

... ENOCH ...

... MYRNA ...



THEN ERNEST FEELEY...ALWAYS THE BUSINESS MAN...ANNOUNCED...

I'M MOVIN' YOU AND MYRNA OUT FRONT, CLING! WE NEED A DRAW FOR THE ADMISSIONS! JEB AND ENOCH ARE THE STARS NOW...



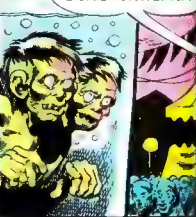
AND SO, WHEN THE ROTTED WRAPPINGS WERE REMOVED FROM MYRNA'S SUNKEN, MUMMIFIED EYES, SHE LOOKED OUT ACROSS THE CROWD AND SAW NOTHING...

I GIVE YOU... MYRNA...



AND WHEN THE CURTAIN WAS PULLED BACK UNCOVERING ENOCH'S TANK, HE LOOKED OUT ACROSS THE CROWD AND SAW NOTHING...

I GIVE YOU... ENOCH!



THUS, IN THE BLACK OF NIGHT, WHEN THE CARNIVAL FOLK LAY ASLEEP, A DRIED AND BONEY HAND MOVED SLOWLY... HESITANTLY...PULLING AWAY ITS ROTTED BROWN WRAPPINGS...



WHILE A BLOATED, PALE HAND SLID UPWARD AND OVER THE TANK-RIM, PULLING ITS CHALKY, PULPY BODY AFTER IT...



THE MORNING HEARD THE SIDE-SHOW TENT ECHO WITH ANGRY VOICES...

HE STOLE ENOUGH!

HE STOLE MYRNA!

CALM DOWN, YOU TWO!



ERNEST QUIETED THE RAGING ODDITY OWNERS...

USE YOUR HEADS, YOU FOOLS! IF BOTH ARE MISSING, NEITHER OF YOU COULD HAVE DONE IT!



OLD DOC CLING KNELT TO THE TANK-BARK AND PICKED UP A MUSTY-SMELLING FRAGMENT...

A PIECE OF MYRNA'S WRAPPINGS!

DROPS OF FORMALDEHYDE! THEY GO THAT WAY!



THE THREE MEN FOLLOWED THE FRAGMENTS OF MUMMY WRAPPINGS AND THE DROPLETS OF FORMALDEHYDE OUT OF THE SIDE-SHOW TENT AND INTO THE MORNING SUNLIGHT! THE TRAIL WAS CLEAR... VERY CLEAR...

IT LEADS TO THAT HOUSE!

LOOK AT THE SIGN!

GASP! JUSTICE OF THE... GOOD LORD!



THE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE WAS VERY FRIENDLY! HE TOLD THE SIDE-SHOW MEN ALL HE KNEW...

COUPLE CAME LAST NIGHT! YEP! WANTED TO GET MARRIED! I DID IT! I PERFORMED THE CEREMONY!

WASN'T THERE ANYTHING, ER STRANGE ABOUT THEM?



SHUCKS! ALL I CAN SAY IS THEY MUST'VE BEEN DRINKING! SMELLED MIGHTY BAD... LIKE AS IF THEY'D BEEN! BUT FIVE BUCKS IS FIVE BUCKS!

DIDN'T YOU SEE...?



DIDN'T SEE NUTHIN'! CAN'T SEE! I'M BLIND, Y'KNOW!

BLIND! GOOD LORD!



HEH, HEH! CAREFUL NOW! DON'T PEEK! HERE COMES THE FINISH! BRACE YOURSELVES! FIRST, LET ME SAY THAT MR. FEELEY, JEB, AND ZACH LOST MYRNA AND ENOCH'S TRAIL AFTER THEY LEFT THE J.P.'S. JUST COULDN'T FIND 'EM! IN FACT, IT WASN'T TILL A YEAR LATER, WHEN THE CARNIVAL RETURNED TO THE VERY OZARK TOWN WHERE ENOCH HAD FIRST JOINED THE SIDE-SHOW...



... THAT MR. FEELEY HEARD ABOUT THE STRANGE DOIN'S UP IN THE MOUNTAINS...

SOMEBODY SAID THEY SEEN 'EM, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE 'EM' WHO EVER HEARD OF A LIVIN' MUMMY AND A TWO-HEADED CORPSE...

WHERE? WHERE? DID THEY SEE 'EM?



UP IN THE OLD CRONE'S CAVE! SHE'S DEAD NOW! BUT THE FOLKS 'ROUND HERE ARE MIGHTY SUPERSTITIOUS! IFN YOU ASK ME, THEY'RE SEEIN' THINGS' NOW

JEB'LL TAKE ME THERE! HE KNOWS WHERE IT IS!



THEY WENT! JEB AND ZACH...WHO'D STAYED ON WITH THE CARNIVAL AS HANDY MEN...AND MR. FEELEY! THEY WENT UP THE MOUNTAIN TO THE OLD CRONE'S CAVE...

LOOK! GOOD LORD! IT'S THEN!



AND THE THREE CARNIVAL MEN DRAGGED THEIR LONG-LOST ODDITIES BACK DOWN THE MOUNTAIN...

MYRNA! MY MYRNA! ENOCH! MY BOY!

AT LAST! AFTER OVER A YEAR!



BUT THE THREE MEN WERE OUT OF EARSHOT WHEN THE WAIL DRIFTED OUT FROM DEEP IN THE BOWELS OF THE CRONE'S CAVE! THEY NEVER SAW THE INFANT-THING CRAWL OUT INTO THE SUNLIGHT.. ITS EYES STREAMING WITH TEARS CRYING FOR ITS PARENTS...



HEH, HEH! YEP! THAT'S IT, KIDDIES! THAT'S MY STORY! YEP! ENOCH OF THE DOUBLE DOMES

WAS MY OLD MAN, AND MYRNA THE MUMMY WAS MY OLD LADY! YOU MIGHT SAY, THE MUMMY WAS MY MOMMY! BY THE WAY! I UNDERSTAND THAT THERE'S A CARNIVAL TODAY... EIGHTY YEARS LATER...

THAT STILL EXHIBITS A MUMMY AND A TWO-HEADED PRESERVED CORPSE! IF ANY OF YOU SEE THEM, WRITE ME! I WANT TO SEND A CARD! IT'S THEIR ANNIVERSARY NEXT MONTH!



THE CRYPT OF TERROR



HEH, HEH! WELL! SO WE MEET AGAIN, DEAR FRIENDS! WELCOME!
WELCOME ONCE MORE TO THE *CRYPT OF TERROR*! THIS TIME I
HAVE A REALLY CHILLING TALE FROM MY COLLECTION OF SPINE-
TINGLERS TO RELATE TO YOU! NOW, LIE BACK IN YOUR CASKETS!
TUCK YOURSELVES IN WITH YOUR SHROUDS! COMFY? GOOD? THEN
I'LL BEGIN! I CALL THIS STORY. . .

THE THING FROM THE GRAVE!



JAMES BARRY AND WILLIAM FERTH WERE BOTH IN LOVE WITH THE SAME GIRL, LAURA MASON! JIM WAS KIND... CONSIDERATE... A **GENTLE MAN!** BILL WAS **BRAZEN... FUN-LOVING...** AND AT TIMES, LAURA WAS ALMOST **AFRAID** OF HIM! AND SO WHEN JIM ASKED THE INEVITABLE QUESTION...



MARRY ME, LAURA! I **KNOW** I CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY!



BUT, JIM! WHAT ABOUT BILL? I... I'M **AFRAID** OF WHAT HE'LL DO WHEN HE FINDS OUT!

DON'T WORRY, LAURA! BUT BILL WILL HAVE TO TAKE IT LIKE A MAN! ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR, Y'KNOW!



YES! BUT BILL ISN'T THE TYPE TO GIVE UP EASILY!

LAURA DIDN'T KNOW HOW RIGHT SHE WAS WHEN SHE SPOKE THOSE WORDS! YES! BILL WAS **NOT** THE TYPE TO GIVE UP SO EASILY! HE **WANTED** LAURA!



...AND I'LL **HAVE** HER, TOO! EVEN IF I HAVE TO **KILL** YOU, JAMES BARRY!

SOON, LAURA AND JIM WERE MARRIED! THEY WERE VERY HAPPY THOSE FIRST FEW WEEKS... BUT THEN, BUSINESS CALLED JIM OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW DAYS...



I'LL BE BACK THURSDAY NIGHT, DEAREST!

OH, JIM! I'M **AFRAID!** I DON'T WANT TO BE LEFT **ALONE!** BILL MIGHT...

BILL WON'T DO ANYTHING TO YOU, LAURA! BUT, IF YOU EVER **ARE** IN DANGER, NO MATTER **WHERE** I AM, SOMEHOW, I'LL GET TO YOU... AND **SAVE** YOU!

YOU'RE JOKING WITH ME, JAMES BARRY... BUT I'VE BEEN **SERIOUS!**



SO HAVE I, LAURA! SO HAVE I! 'BYE!

'BYE, JIM! HURRY BACK!



JIM'S CAR SPED ALONG A DARK COUNTRY ROAD TOWARDS THE MAIN HIGHWAY! THE HEADLIGHTS, KNIFING THROUGH THE VELVETY BLACKNESS, SUDDENLY FELL UPON...



A MAN! STANDING IN THE ROAD...



JIM PRESSED HARD ON HIS BRAKES AND THE CAR SCREECHED TO A STOP...

CRAZY FOOL! I COULD HAVE KILLED YOU! WHO ARE YOU... ANYWAY?

BILL!
IT'S ME...
BILL!



THE SHADOWY FIGURE MOVED TOWARDS THE CAR...AND AS HE PASSED THE HEADLIGHT, A GLINT OF SHINY STEEL CAUGHT JIM'S EYE...

HE... HE'S GOT A KNIFE!
HE'S...GOING TO KILL ME!



THE SOUND OF A STRUGGLE SHATTERED THE SILENCE HANGING OVER THE DESERTED ROAD AND THE HEAVY WOODS FLANKING IT! THEN THERE WAS A THUD AND A PIERCING SHRIEK...

...AND NOW, LAURA WILL BE
MINE! ALL MINE!



BILL FERTH PICKED UP THE BODY OF THE MURDERED JAMES BARRY AND DRAGGED IT INTO THE WOODS...

... GOT TO GET RID OF THE BODY SO
NO ONE WILL EVER FIND IT! GOT TO
BURY IT DEEP IN THESE WOODS!



AGAIN THE THICK SILENCE OF THE WOODS WAS BROKEN! THIS TIME BY THE SOUND OF A SPADE STRIKING THE SOFT EARTH BELOW TOWERING TREES...

SORRY TO GIVE YOU SUCH A CRUDE BURIAL, JIM OL' BOY, BUT IT'S THE BEST I CAN DO UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES!



SOON, A GAPING HOLE WAS OPENED AND THE STIFF BODY OF JAMES BARRY WAS DROPPED INTO IT...

NOW TO COVER IT UP, DITCH THE CAR, AND GET BACK HOME! THEN ALL I DO IS WAIT! IF I PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT, SHE'LL BE *MINE*!



A LITTLE LATER, THE SLEEK FORM OF JAMES BARRY'S AUTOMOBILE HURTTLED OVER A CLIFF INTO A DEEP LAKE...

THEY'LL NEVER FIND THE CAR! IT'LL SINK INTO THE MUD AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LAKE!



AND SO THE JOB WAS DONE! BILL FERTH HAD PLANNED EVERYTHING CAREFULLY! THE WEEKS WENT BY, AND THEN THE TIME CAME FOR HIM TO GO AND SEE LAURA...



YES, LAURA! BUT IT'S OVER A MONTH NOW! HE'S LEFT YOU! HE'S PROBABLY FOUND ANOTHER WOMAN!

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT, BILL! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HIM! I KNOW IT! I FEEL IT!



BILL COULD WAIT! HE HAD PLENTY OF TIME! SHE'D COME AROUND! HE WAS SURE! AFTER ANOTHER MONTH...

IF ANYTHING HAD HAPPENED TO HIM, YOU WOULD HAVE KNOWN BY NOW, LAURA! CAN'T YOU SEE? HE'S LEFT YOU... DESERTED YOU!

I'LL WAIT FOR HIM... TO COME BACK!



HE'LL NEVER COME BACK! NEVER!

THEN I'LL WAIT FOR HIM FOREVER! I'LL NEVER STOP LOVING HIM, BILL! JIM WAS MY LIFE! WITHOUT HIM...



THEN... IT'S ALL WASTED! THE PLANNING... THE WORK... THE WAITING... WASTED!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?



YES! I KILLED HIM! HE'S DEAD!
I WANTED YOU, LAURA AND HE
STOOD IN MY WAY!



Y-YOU K-KILLED
JIM? I HATE
YOU...YOU...YOU
MURDERER! HATE
YOU...HATE...

NOW... I'VE GOT TO KILL YOU, LAURA! IF
I CAN'T HAVE YOU, NO ONE ELSE WILL
EITHER! I'LL MAKE SURE OF THAT!



YOU... YOU'RE
MAD...
A RAVING
MADMAN!



BILL FERTH FORCED LAURA INTO HIS CAR
AND DROVE HER TO A DESERTED CABIN...
DEEP IN THE WOODS NEAR WHERE HE HAD
KILLED JIM...



THIS ROOM HAS NO WINDOWS...SO
WHEN I LOCK YOU IN, YOU WON'T BE
ABLE TO ESCAPE!

W...WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO DO
TO ME?



I'M GOING TO SET FIRE TO THE CABIN! THEY'LL
NEVER FIND WHAT'S LEFT OF YOU...NEVER!
IT'LL BE ASHES...ALL ASHES!

FACED WITH THE HORROR OF BEING
BURNED ALIVE BY THIS MADMAN,
LAURA SCREAMED FOR HELP...



IT WAS AN EAR-SPLITTING SCREAM
THAT SHOT THROUGH THE WOODS,
REVERBERATING FROM TREE TO TREE
... ROCK TO ROCK...



AND SOMEWHERE OUT THERE, UNDER
THE SOFT EARTH THAT COVERED IT...
SOMETHING STIRRED... THEN PUSHED
ITS DECAYED AND ROTTED HAND UP...
UP... THROUGH THE BLACK DIRT INTO
THE BLACK NIGHT...



EEEEEEEAAGGH

SLOWLY, THE EARTH GAVE WAY, AS THE THING PUSHED UPWARD, CLAWING! THE CLEAN FRESH AIR SEEPED DOWN INTO ITS SHALLOW GRAVE...



IT GOT TO ITS FEET CLUMBSILY... STOOD ERECT IN THE MOONLIGHT! IT LIFTED ITS HEAD... LISTENING! IT HAD HEARD A SCREAM... A SCREAM THAT HAD MADE IT SEEK THE OPEN AIR...



IT MOVED FORWARD AT A STUMBLING GATE! ITS ROTTED LEGS... ITS SIGHTLESS EYES... THE DECAYED FLESH THAT CLUNG HERE AND THERE TO WHITENED BONE... MOVED THROUGH THE UNDERBRUSH...



BACK AT THE CABIN, BILL POURED THE CAN OF KEROSENE AROUND THE OUTSIDE WALLS...



GO AHEAD... SCREAM, YOU FOOL! NO ONE WILL HEAR YOU!

BUT OUT IN THE DEEP SHADOWS OF THE WOODS, THE THING HEARD THE SCREAM... AND STUMBLED FORWARD... TOWARDS IT...



THE CABIN WAS ON FIRE NOW! INSIDE LAURA CRINGED AGAINST THE DOOR AS THE FLAMES LICKED AT HER... WHITE... HOT...



OH... SAVE ME, JIM! WHEREVER YOU ARE... YOU PROMISED... OOOOH!

OUTSIDE, BILL WATCHED AS THE FLAMES LEAPED HIGHER AND HIGHER! THEN, FROM THE FRINGE OF THE TREES, HE SAW THE THING COMING... STUMBLING... STAGGERING...



GOOD LORD!

THE THING DID NOT SEE BILL! IT WAS LOOKING AT THE BURNING CABIN! BILL PUT HIS HAND OVER HIS MOUTH! HE WAS SICK! HE WHIMPERED...



J-JIM...

THE THING WENT INTO THE FIRE! IT DID NOT FEEL THE FLAMES LICKING AT ITS TATTERED CLOTHES... ITS ROTTED FLESH! IT WAS DEAD! IT COULD FEEL NOTHING...



AFTER A FEW MOMENTS IT CAME OUT! ITS HAIR WAS SINGED! ITS DECAYED FLESH WAS CHARRED! WHERE THE FIRE HAD TOUCHED THE BONE, IT WAS BLACK AND SCORCHED! IT CARRIED THE GIRL...



BILL WAS SCREAMING NOW! HE BEGAN TO RUN WILDLY INTO THE WOODS... SCREAMING... SCREAMING...



THE THING PUT LAURA DOWN ON THE COOL GRASS FAR FROM THE BURNING CABIN! SHE WAS UNCONSCIOUS! SHE HAD FAINTED BEFORE THE THING HAD REACHED HER! SHE HAD NOT SEEN IT...



THEN THE THING TURNED... TOWARDS THE HYSTERICAL SHRIEKING THAT CAME FROM THE NEARBY WOODS...



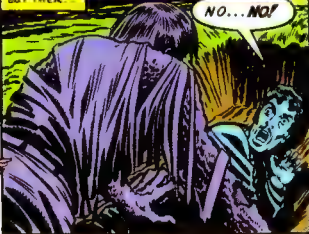
SLOWLY IT SHAMBLED TOWARDS THE SCREAMING BILL AS HE CRASHED MADLY THROUGH THE THICK UNDER-GROWTH...



SUDDENLY, BILL STUMBLED INTO A YAWNING BLACK HOLE...



THE THING WAS COMING, NOW! BILL TRIED TO STAND BUT HE COULDN'T! THE PAIN! HE HAD BROKEN HIS LEG! HE TRIED TO DRAG HIMSELF FROM THE SHALLOW PIT... BUT THEN...



THE THING WAS ON TOP OF HIM, PINNING HIM DOWN! HE TRIED TO STRUGGLE, BUT THE THING WAS STRONG! IT HELD HIM EASILY...



AND THEN THE THING BEGAN, WITH ONE ROTTED AND DECAYED HAND, TO FILL THE GRAVE AGAIN... BURYING THEM...



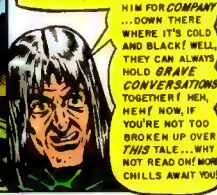
IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO FILL THE GRAVE! THE DIRT WAS GETTING TO BILL'S EYES... HIS MOUTH! HIS SCREAMING WAS WILDER NOW... HYSTERICAL, MAD, TERRORIZED SCREAMING...



AND THEN... AFTER A WHILE... THE SCREAMING STOPPED...



AND THAT'S MY STORY, DEAR READER! JIM CERTAINLY *KEPT HIS PROMISE* TO LAURA, DIDN'T HE? LUCKY FOR HER SHE *FAINTED BEFORE* HE GOT THERE, THOUGH! SHE'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER HIM IN A *NICE* WAY, NOW! AND *POOR BILL!* NOW JIM'S GOT HIM FOR COMPANY...



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! I SEE YOU'RE **HORROR-HUNGRY** AGAIN. BACK FOR MORE **SAVORY SERVINGS** OF SCREAMS FROM MY **CAULDRON**? WELL, **GOOD!** WELCOME TO **THE HAUNT OF FEAR!** THIS IS YOUR **DELIRIUM-DIETICIAN**, THE OLD WITCH, COOKING UP ANOTHER **REVOLTING RECIPE!** READY? GOT YOUR **DROOL CUPS** FASTENED UNDER YOUR **DRIBBLING CHINS**? GOT YOUR **SHROUDS** TIED NEATLY AROUND YOUR **NECKS**? THEN I'LL BEGIN DISHING OUT THE **TERROR-TIDBIT** I CALL...

HORROR WE? HOW'S BAYOU?

THE MOSS-LADEN GYPRESS TREES THAT LINE THE RUTTED BAYOU ROAD SEEM TO PART AND AN OLD PLANTATION HOUSE, WEATHERBEATEN AND FADED, LOOMS UP IN THE CAR'S HEADLIGHT BEAMS! ITS COLUMNED PORTICO LEERS OMINOUSLY LIKE SOME GIGANTIC FANGED MONSTER SQUATTING IN THE ROAD, BLOCKING THE AUTOMOBILE'S FURTHER PROGRESS! OFF IN THE DISTANCE A SWAMP BIRD SCREAMS INTO THE NIGHT, AS IF LAUGHING AT THE DRIVER'S DISCOMFORT...

BLAST IT! THIS ROAD ENDS HERE!
BUT I'M SURE THAT SIGN BACK THERE
POINTED THIS WAY...

THE GAR DOOR SWINGS OPEN AND A YOUNG MAN STEPS OUT! HE STRIDES TOWARD THE RUN-DOWN MANSION... THERE'S A LIGHT SHINING THROUGH ONE OF THOSE SHUTTERED WINDOWS! THAT MEANS SOMEONE'S **LIVING** THERE! PERHAPS **THEY** CAN GIVE ME **DIRECTIONS**...



GREY FORMS SCATTER AS THE LOST STRANGER MOUNTS THE STEPS OF THE COLLUMBED PORCH...

WHEW! **SWAMP RATS**! UGH! HOW COULD ANYONE **LIVE** OUT IN THIS GOD-FORSAKEN COUNTRY?



THE LARGE BRASS DOOR-KNOCKER RESOUNDS HOLLOWLY INSIDE THE ONCE GLORIOUS HOUSE! FOOTSTEPS APPROACH AND THE HEAVY OAK FRONT DOOR CREAKS OPEN...

YES? HOW DO YOU DO? MY NAME IS **FORMAN. MAX FORMAN.** I MUST HAVE MADE A **WRONG TURN** A FEW MILES BACK...



THE DOOR OPENS WIDE, REVEALING A SMALL, SAD-EYED, MIDDLE-AGED MAN...

COME IN, MR FORMAN! COME IN! MY! I'D GONE TO BED! I'D GIVEN UP FOR TONIGHT!

GIVEN UP? I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND!



GIVEN UP **WAITING** FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU TO COME ALONG, MR FORMAN! YOU SEE, I **SWITCHED** THAT SIGN DOWN THERE SO YOU'D **MAKE** THE TURN INTO OUR ROAD...

YOU... YOU DID THAT... ON PURPOSE! WHY?

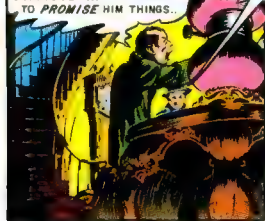


FOR EVERETT, MR. FORMAN! EVERETT...MY BROTHER! EVERY SO OFTEN HE GETS **DIFFICULT**...AND I HAVE TO **PROMISE** HIM THINGS...

BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH ME?

EVERETT IS **MAD**, MR. FORMAN! THAT'S WHY WE **LIVE** OUT HERE IN THE **BAYOUS**! HE IS **DAANGEROUS**! HE IS A **HOMICIDAL MANIAC**...

BUT WHY... WHY... ME? CHOKO...



EVERETT HAS A STRONG
DESIRE TO KILL, MR FORMAN!
THIS DESIRE CANNOT GO
UNSATISFIED FOR ANY
LENGTH OF TIME! IF IT
DOES... HE MAY TURN
ON ME!

YOU'RE...YOU'RE
KING! THIS
SOME SORT
OF GAG!

IF YOU WANT
BEHIND YOU
SEE THAT
NO JOKE.



UH-HUNN!
...FOR EVERETT?
FOR ME?

UH-HUHH!
UH-HUHH!

KEEP AWAY!

UH-HUHH!
UH-HUHH!

KEEP AWAY!

THE SCREAMING PROTESTS OF THE YOUNG MAN DIE IN A CHOKING GURGLE AS THE LUMBERING MANIAC'S VICE-LIKE FINGERS CLOSE AROUND HIS NECK ...

UH-HUHH.
UH-HUHH!

TAKE HIM AWAY, EVERETT! TAKE HIM DOWN INTO THE CELLAR.
I DON'T WANT TO SEE.

THE SCREAMING PROTESTS OF THE YOUNG MAN DIE IN A CHOKING GURGLE AS THE LUMBERING MANIAC'S VICE-LIKE FINGERS CLOSE AROUND HIS NECK ...

UH-HUHH.
UH-HUHH!

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UH-HUHH.
UH-HUHH!

TAKE HIM AWAY, EVERETT! TAKE HIM DOWN INTO THE CELLAR.
I DON'T WANT TO SEE.

THE ELDER MAN WATCHES AS HIS YOUNGER MAD BROTHER SWINGS THE PROSTRATE FORM OF THE STRANGER OVER HIS MASSIVE SHOULDERS AND MOVES OFF THROUGH THE MUSTY OLD MANSION...

I DON'T WANT TO *SEE* YOU DISMEMBER HIS BODY!

UH-HUHH... UH-HUHH...




3

THE ELDER MAN WATCHES AS HIS YOUNGER MAD BROTHER SWINGS THE PROSTRATE FORM OF THE STRANGER OVER HIS MASSIVE SHOULDERS AND MOVES OFF THROUGH THE MUSTY OLD MANSION...

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I DON'T WANT TO *SEE* YOU DISMEMBER HIS BODY!

UH-HUHH... UH-HUHH...



3

LATER, THE DOOR TO THE OLD PLANTATION HOUSE OPENS AND THE ELDER BROTHER COMES OUT.

NOW TO GET RID OF THE CAR...

THE CAR LEAPS FORWARD WITH A LOUD GRINDING OF GEARS, DOWN AN OVERGROWN PATH, FINALLY STOPPING BEFORE A SHIMMERING YELLOW POOL...

THE QUICK-SAND POOL WILL SWALLOW UP ALL TRACES OF IT...

RELEASING THE EMERGENCY BRAKE, THE ELDER BROTHER LEAPS OUT, AND THE CAR ROLLS FORWARD INTO THE SUCKING BOG... SINKING SLOWLY FROM SIGHT! BEYOND, FROM THE MANSION, A SICKENING SHRIEK OF LAUGHTER ECHOES INTO THE BAYOU NIGHT

POOR EVERETT. WELL, PERHAPS THIS WILL SATISFY HIM... FOR A WHILE, AT LEAST!

FINALLY THE CAR HAS DISAPPEARED BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE ROLLING QUICKSAND POOL! THE ELDER BROTHER MOVES BACK THROUGH THE BAYOU OVERGROWTH TO THE MANSION! EVERETT STANDS IN THE OPEN DOORWAY, BREATHING HEAVILY! HIS HANDS ARE BLOTCHED RED...

I'M... FINISHED, SIDNEY! COME... SEE!

N-NQTHANK YOU, EVERETT! JUST PUT WHAT'S LEFT OF HIM IN THE SACK, AS USUAL...

EVERETT LUMBERS OFF AND RETURNS SHORTLY AFTER, A LARGE BLOOD-STAINED SACK SWUNG OVER HIS SHOULDERS...

HE... HE WAS A DOCTOR, SIDNEY! I FOUND HIS CARD! I DON'T LIKE DOCTORS!

THROW WHAT'S LEFT OF HIM IN THE QUICKSAND POOL, EVERETT... WITH THE OTHERS!

EVERETT'S STUPID FACE BRIGHTENS! HE GRINS IDIOTICALLY...

REMEMBER THE OTHERS, SIDNEY? THE FAT SALESMAN... AND THE WOMAN...

YES, EVERETT! I REMEMBER! GO AHEAD, NOW! IN THE QUICK-SAND POOL...

THE WOMAN WAS NICE! HER FLESH WAS SO SOFT! WHEN I CUT...

EVERETT!



EVERETT SCURRIES OFF TOWARD THE QUICKSAND POOL WITH HIS GORY CARGO! SIDNEY WATCHES HIM GO! YES! THE WOMAN! SHE WAS THE FIRST! HE REMEMBERED HER!

I'M AFRAID I'VE LOST MY WAY! COULD YOU HELP ME GET BACK TO THE THE HIGHWAY?

UH-HUHH!
UH-HUHH!

EVERETT?
WHO IS
IT?

I BEG YOUR PARDON, MA'AM! MY BROTHER IS NOT TOO BRIGHT! COULD I HELP YOU?

I... I WANTED TO REACH HOUMA BY DARK! I MUST HAVE TURNED OFF THE MAIN ROAD...

YOU'LL NEVER MAKE HOUMA TONIGHT, MA'AM! YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY THE NIGHT, THOUGH! YOU CAN START OUT FRESH IN THE MORNING!

WELL, I DON'T KNOW! I WOULDN'T WANT TO IMPOSE...

YES! THE WOMAN HAD BEEN THE FIRST! DURING THAT NIGHT, EVERETT HAD GONE TO HER ROOM AND...

THE SCREAM HAD AWAKENED SIDNEY! HE'D RUSHED TO THE WOMAN'S ROOM...

EVERETT
CHOKED...

UH-HUHH!
UH-HUHH!

HUH?
WHAT
WAS
THAT?

EEEEEE...G
H H

SIDNEY HAD THROWN THE DISMEMBERED PARTS OF THE WOMAN'S BODY INTO THE QUICKSAND POOL! THAT HAD BEEN THE BEGINNING OF IT! AFTER THAT, EVERETT HAD GOTTEN WORSE AND WORSE! AND SIDNEY REALIZED THAT HE'D HAVE TO SUPPLY HIS MAD BROTHER WITH OTHER VICTIMS TO KEEP HIM SATISFIED...

ALL RIGHT, EVERETT! ALL RIGHT!
I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING!

UH-HUHH
UH-HUHH

SO SIDNEY'D THOUGHT OF ALTERING THE DIRECTIONAL SIGN DOWN AT THE ROAD, SO WANDERERS WOULD COME TO THE MANSION...

MY NAME'S JACKSON... ANTHONY JACKSON! I'M A TRAVELING SALESMAN! I SEEM TO HAVE GOTTEN ONTO YOUR ROAD BY MISTAKE!

COME IN,
MR. JACKSON!
COME IN!

AND NOW THE DOCTOR! SIDNEY WATCHES AS EVERETT LUMBERS BACK ONTO THE PORCH CARRYING THE EMPTY SACK.

DID YOU ? YES, SIDNEY! I . . . I THREW THE PIECES IN THE POOL!

COME TO BED, Y-YES. SIDNEY! EVERETT!

SOON, THE LIGHTS BLINK OFF ONE BY ONE IN THE RAMSHAKLE OLD PLANTATION HOUSE! SIDNEY AND HIS MAD BROTHER ARE ASLEEP! BUT DOWN IN THE BAYOU, THE QUICKSAND POOL ROLLS AND QUIVERS

BENEATH ITS SUCKING SURFACE, THE DISMEMBERED PARTS OF THREE BODIES... A WOMAN'S, A SALESMAN'S, AND A DOCTOR'S BUMP TOGETHER, TURNING LAZILY... MELTING... FUSING... REORGANIZING THEMSELVES... UNTIL

A STRINGY-HAIRED ROTTED WOMAN'S HEAD BOBS TO THE SURFACE...

A PULPY HAND REACHES INTO THE BAYOU NIGHT

ANOTHER FOLLOWS THE PLUMP SALESMAN'S FACE APPEARS

AND THEN THE RECENTLY MURDERED DOCTOR'S RISES

IN HIS BEDROOM, SIDNEY TURNS UNCOMFORTABLY IN HIS SLEEP! SUDDENLY, THE DOOR TO HIS CHAMBER BURSTS OPEN AND THREE FIGURES ARE FRAMED IN IT, SWAYING UNSTEADILY...

WHO...WHO'S THERE? EVERETT?
IS THAT... YOU? I THOUGHT I
LOCKED YOU... IN... YOUR GASP

THE FIGURES MOVE FORWARD... INTO THE LIGHT!
BUT THERE IS SOMETHING STRANGELY WRONG ABOUT
THE FIGURES! SIDNEY STARES IN HORROR! A WHIMPER
ESCAPES FROM HIS THROAT...

NO! NO! OH, LORD...

FOR THE DISMEMBERED PARTS
OF EVERETT'S THREE VICTIMS
HAVE FUSED INCORRECTLY!
THE WOMAN'S HEAD RESTS UPON
THE SALESMAN'S TORSO...

...WHILE DOCTOR FORMAN'S
HEAD RESTS UPON THE
WOMAN'S TORSO...

...AND MR. JACKSON'S, THE
SALESMAN'S, HEAD HAS FUSED
WITH THE DOCTOR'S BODY...

THE OTHER PARTS, THE ARMS AND LEGS OF EACH,
ARE EQUALLY AS CONFUSED! THE CONGLOMERATIONS
MOVE FORWARD... TOWARD THE HYSTERICALLY
SCREAMING SIDNEY...

CLUTCHED IN ONE OF THE MIXED-UP-FIGURE'S HANDS
IS A SMALL BLACK BAG... THE KIND USED BY DOC-
TORS TO CARRY THEIR SHINY LITTLE SHARP
INSTRUMENTS...

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAGGGGGHHHHHHH!!

LOCKED IN HIS BARRED-WINDOW ROOM, EVERETT LISTENS WITH GREAT PUZZLEMENT TO THE SHRIEKING THAT ECHOES THROUGH THE OLD HOUSE FOR THE NEXT TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES...

YAAAAEEEEEEEEEEEE!

FINALLY, THE SHRIEKING STOPS. AND ONLY A SOFT PITIFUL SOB-BING IS HEARD! FROM THE BARRED WINDOW, EVERETT WATCHES AS THREE FIGURES TOTTER OUT OF THE MANSION

... AND BACK INTO THE BAYOU TO THE QUICKSAND POOL...



SUDDENLY, A KEY RATTLES INTO THE LOCK OF THE HEAVY DOOR OF EVERETT'S ROOM! HE TURNS FROM THE BARRED WINDOW! SIDNEY, OR WHAT WAS ONCE SIDNEY BUT IS NOW NOTHING MORE THAN A CONFUSED REORGANIZATION OF SIDNEY'S DISMEMBERED BODY, STANDS BEFORE HIM...THE UPSIDE-DOWN HEAD HANGING FROM THE LEFT HIP, SOBBING...THE LEFT LEG, SEWN TO THE LEFT SHOULDER, CROOKED AWKWARDLY AROUND A MAKE-SHIFT CRUTCH...THE RIGHT LEG SWAYING FROM THE RIGHT SHOULDER...THE LEFT ARM, ERUPTING FROM THE NECK, GESTICULATING...AND THE RIGHT ARM SUPPORTING THE ENTIRE GRISLY SIGHT

EVERETT! LOOK...WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO ME!

UH-UHH. CHOKES...

HEE, HEE! YEP, KIDDIES! EVERETT'S VICTIMS REALLY MESSED UP HIS BROTHER SIDNEY! YOU MIGHT SAY THEY GOT TOGETHER! OF COURSE, THE DOG WAS A SURGEON, SO HIS HEAD DIRECTED THE WHOLE OPERATION! WHAT A LAUGH, THOUGH! HE'D HAD NO ANAESTHETIC IN HIS BAG! SIDNEY THOUGHT IT WAS A SCREAM

WHEN HE HEARD IT! SIDNEY AND EVERETT! YOU ASK? OH, THEY'RE STILL DOWN THERE, DEEP IN THE BAYOUS OF LOUISIANA! NEXT TIME YOU'RE DRIVING IN THAT SECTION, JUST LOOK FOR THAT! THAT IS...IF THEY DON'T LOOK FOR YOU FIRST! AND NOW, THE VAULT-KEEPER WAITS! SEE YOU LATER...



The OCTOBER GAME

MITCH PUT THE GUN BACK INTO THE BUREAU DRAWER.

NO, NOT THAT WAY. LOUISE WOULDN'T SUFFER THAT WAY. SHE WOULD BE DEAD AND IT WOULD BE OVER AND SHE WOULDN'T SUFFER. IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT THIS THING HAVE, ABOVE ALL, DURATION. DURATION THROUGH IMAGINATION. HOW CAN I PROLONG HER SUFFERING? HOW, FIRST OF ALL, CAN I BRING IT ABOUT? WELL...



THE MAN STANDING BEFORE THE BEDROOM MIRROR CAREFULLY FITTED HIS CUFF LINKS TOGETHER. HE PAUSED LONG ENOUGH TO HEAR THE CHILDREN RUN BY SWIFTLY ON THE STREET BELOW, OUTSIDE THIS WARM TWO-STORY HOUSE, LIKE SO MANY GRAY MICE, THE CHILDREN. . . LIKE SO MANY LEAVES...



BY THE SOUND OF THE CHILDREN, YOU KNEW THE CALENDAR DAY. BY THEIR SCREAMS, YOU KNEW WHAT EVENING IT WAS. YOU KNEW IT WAS VERY LATE IN THE YEAR. OCTOBER. THE LAST DAY OF OCTOBER, WITH WHITE BONE MASKS AND CUT PUMPKINS AND THE SMELL OF DROPPED CANDLE FAT.



A HORROR SUSPENSTORY
ADAPTED FROM A TALE BY
RAY BRADBURY

NO. THINGS HADN'T BEEN RIGHT FOR SOME TIME. OCTOBER DIDN'T HELP ANY. IF ANYTHING, IT MADE THINGS WORSE. HE NODDED SLOWLY AT HIS IMAGE IN THE MIRROR... ADJUSTING HIS BLACK BOW-TIE...

IF... IF THIS WERE *SPRING*, THEN THERE MIGHT BE A *CHANGE*. BUT *TONIGHT*, ALL THE WORLD IS BURNING DOWN INTO *RUIN*. THERE'S NO *GREEN* OF SPRING, NONE OF THE *FRESHNESS*, NONE OF THE *PROMISE*...



BUT IT WAS *DIFFERENT* TONIGHT. THERE WAS A FEELING OF AUTUMN COMING TO LAST A *MILLION YEARS*. THERE WOULD *BE NO SPRING*. HE HAD BEEN CRYING QUIETLY ALL EVENING. IT DIDN'T SHOW ON HIS FACE. IT WAS ALL SOMEWHERE HIDDEN. BUT IT WOULDN'T STOP...

DADDY?

MARION?



AS HE FINISHED HIS BOW-TIE AND PUT ON HIS DARK COAT, MARION APPEARED IN THE DOOR, ALL SKELETONOUS IN HER DISGUISE...

HOW DO I LOOK, DADDY?

FINE!



MITCH HAD NEVER LIKED OCTOBER... EVER SINCE HE FIRST LAY IN THE AUTUMN LEAVES BEFORE HIS GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE MANY YEARS AGO AND HEARD THE WIND AND SAW THE EMPTY TREES. IT HAD MADE HIM CRY. WITHOUT A REASON...

SOB... SOB...



AND A LITTLE OF THAT SADNESS RETURNED EACH YEAR TO HIM. IT ALWAYS WENT AWAY WITH THE SPRING.

THERE WAS A SOFT RUNNING IN THE HALL. IT WAS MARION, HIS LITTLE ONE. ALL EIGHT QUIET YEARS OF HER, NEVER A WORD. JUST HER LUMINOUS GRAY EYES AND HER WONDERING LITTLE MOUTH. MARION HAD BEEN IN AND OUT ALL EVENING, TRYING ON VARIOUS MASKS, ASKING HIM WHICH WAS MOST TERRIFYING, MOST HORRIBLE. THEY'D BOTH FINALLY DECIDED...

THE *SKELETON MASK*, DEAR. IT'LL 'SCARE THE BEANS' FROM PEOPLE!

ISN'T IT JUST *AWFUL*, DADDY? I LIKE IT, TOO!



FROM UNDER THE MASK, BLONDE HAIR SHOWED. FROM THE SKULL SOCKETS, SMALL BLUE EYES SMILED. MITCH SIGHED. MARION... AND LOUISE... THE TWO SILENT DENOUNCERS OF HIS VIRILITY, HIS DARK POWER...

COMING DOWN, DADDY?

IN A MOMENT...



WHAT **ALCHEMY** MIGHT THERE **STAINED** BEEN IN **LOUISE** THAT **TOOK** THE **DARK** OF A **DARK** MAN AND **BLEACHED** AND **BLEACHED** THE **DARK** BROWN EYES AND **BLACK** HAIR AND **WASHED** AND **BLEACHED** THE **INGROWN** BABY ALL **DURING** THE **PERIOD** BEFORE **BIRTH** UNTIL THE **CHILD** WAS **BORN**, **MARION**, **BLONDE**, **BLUE** EYES, **RUDDY**-CHEEKED...

IT'S A **GIRL**, MITCH. A **BLONDE**, **BLUE-EYED** GIRL...

OH...



LOUISE HAD **NEVER** WANTED A CHILD. SHE'D BEEN **FRIGHTENED** OF THE **IDEA** OF **BIRTH**. HE'D **FORCED** THE **CHILD** ON HER. IT HAD BEEN **VERY** **EASY** FOR LOUISE TO **HATE** THIS **HUSBAND** WHO **SO** **WANTED** A **SON** THAT HE'D **GIVE** HIS **ONLY** **WIFE** **OVER** TO A **MORTUARY**. WHEN MITCH HAD **PUT** OUT A **HAND** TO **TOUCH**, THE **MOTHER** HAD **TURNED** **AWAY** TO **CONSPIRE** WITH HER **NEW** **PINK** **DAUGHTER**-CHILD, **AWAY** FROM THE **DARK** **FORCING** **MURDERER**.

NO, DON'T **TOUCH** HER...

LOUISE. I...



NOW IT WAS **OCTOBER** AGAIN. THERE HAD BEEN OTHER **OCTOBERS**. HE'D **THOUGHT** OF THE **LONG** **WINTERS**, **YEAR** **AFTER** **YEAR**, THE **ENDLESS** **MONTHS** **MORTARED** INTO THE **HOUSE** BY AN **INSANE** **FALL** OF **SNOW**, **TRAPPED** WITH A **WOMAN** AND **CHILD**, **NEITHER** OF **WHOM** **LOVED** HIM...



SOMETIMES HE **SUSPECTED** THAT LOUISE HAD **CONCEIVED** THE **CHILD** AS AN **IDEA**, **COMPLETELY** **ASEXUAL**, A **CONCEPTION** OF **CONTEMPTUOUS** **MIND** AND **CELL**. AS A **FIRM** **REBUKE** TO HIM, SHE HAD **PRODUCED** A **CHILD** IN HER **OWN** **IMAGE**. HER **EYES**, THAT **DAY** IN THE **HOSPITAL**, WERE **COLD**. THEY'D **SAID**...

I HAVE A **BLONDE** **DAUGHTER**, MITCH. **LOOK**...



AND IT HAD ALL BEEN **SO** **BEAUTIFULLY** **IRONIC**. HIS **SELFISHNESS** **DESERVED** IT. THE **DOCTOR** HAD **SHAKEN** HIS **HEAD** AND **SAID**...

SORRY, MR. **WILDER**, YOUR **WIFE** WILL **NEVER** HAVE **ANOTHER** **CHILD**. THIS WAS THE **LAST** ONE!

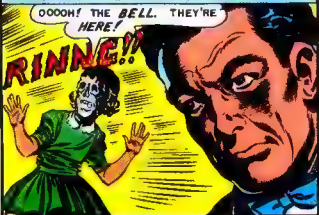
AND.. AND I WANTED A **BOY**!



DURING THE **EIGHT** **YEARS**, THERE HAD BEEN **RESPITES**. IN **SPRING** AND **SUMMER** HE **GOT** **OUT**, **WALKED**, **WENT** TO **BALL** **GAMES**; THERE WERE **DESPERATE** **SOLUTIONS** TO THE **DESPERATE** **PROBLEM** OF A **HATED** **MAN**...



BUT IN WINTER, THE HIKES AND GAMES AND ESCAPES FELL AWAY WITH THE LEAVES. LIFE, LIKE A TREE, STOOD EMPTY, THE FRUIT PICKED, THE SAP RUN TO EARTH. AND NOW, THE EIGHTH WINTER COMING, HE KNEW THINGS WERE FINALLY AT AN END. HE SIMPLY COULD NOT WEAR THIS ONE THROUGH...



THERE WAS AN ACID WALLED OFF IN HIM THAT HAD SLOWLY EATEN THROUGH TISSUE AND TISSUE OVER THE YEARS... AND NOW, TONIGHT, IT WOULD REACH THE WILD EXPLOSIVE IN HIM AND ALL WOULD BE OVER. DOWNSTAIRS, THERE WERE SHOUTS AND HILARITY... MARION, GREETING THE FIRST ARRIVALS... LOUISE, TAKING PARENTS' COATS...



A RICH SYRUPY SMELL OF CANDY FILLED THE BUSTLING HOUSE. LOUISE HAD LAID OUT APPLES IN NEW SKINS OF CARAMEL. THERE WERE VAST BOWLS OF PUNCH FRESH-MIXED...



... STRINGED APPLES IN EACH DOORWAY... SCOOPED, VENTED PUMPKINS PEERING TRIANGULARLY...



...AND A WAITING TUB OF WATER IN THE CENTER OF THE LIVING ROOM, WAITING WITH A SACK OF APPLES NEARBY FOR THE BOBBLING TO BEGIN...



MITCH WALKED TOWARD THE STAIRS. HE HESITATED...

WHY DON'T I JUST PACK A *SUITCASE* AND LEAVE? NO. NOT WITHOUT *HURTING* LOUISE AS MUCH AS *SHE'S* HURT ME. *DIVORCE* WOULDN'T HURT HER AT ALL. NO, I MUST *HURT* HER. FIGURE SOME WAY TO TAKE *MARION* AWAY FROM HER, LEGALLY. YES. *THAT'S* IT. *THAT* WOULD *HURT* MOST OF ALL. TO TAKE *MARION* AWAY...

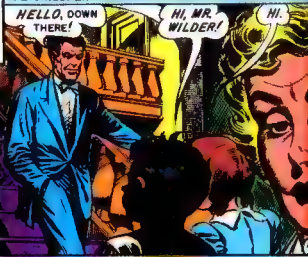


HE DESCENDED THE STAIRS. LOUISE DIDN'T LOOK UP, THE CHILDREN SHOUTED AND WAVED AS HE CAME DOWN...

HELLO, DOWN THERE!

HI, MR. WILDER!

HI.



BY TEN O'CLOCK THE DOORBELL HAD STOPPED RINGING, THE APPLES WERE BITTEN FROM STRINGED DOORS, THE PINK CHILD FACES WERE WIPE DRY FROM APPLE BOBBLING, NAPKINS WERE SMEARED WITH CARAMEL AND PUNCH, AND HE, THE HUSBAND, HAD TAKEN OVER. HE TOOK THE PARTY RIGHT OUT OF LOUISE'S HANDS. HE RAN ABOUT, TALKING TO THE TWENTY CHILDREN AND THE TWELVE PARENTS, WHO WERE HAPPY WITH THE SPECIAL SPIKED CIDER HE'D FIXED THEM...

HE SUPERVISED PIN THE TAIL ON THE DONKEY...



...SPIN THE BOTTLE...



...MUSICAL CHAIRS...



...AND ALL THE REST, MIDST FITS OF SHOUTING LAUGHTER, THEN, IN THE TRIANGULAR-EYED PUMPKIN SHINE, ALL HOUSE LIGHTS OUT, HE CRIED.

HUSH! FOLLOW ME!



HE TIPTOED TOWARD THE CELLAR. THE PARENTS COMMENTED TO EACH OTHER, NODDING AT THE CLEVER HUSBAND, SPEAKING TO THE LUCKY WIFE...

HOW WELL HE GETS ON WITH THE CHILDREN.

YES.

THE CELLAR! THE TOMB OF THE WITCH!



THE CHILDREN CROWDED AFTER THE HUSBAND, SQUEALING HE MADE A MOCK SHIVER...

ABANDON HOPE... ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE.



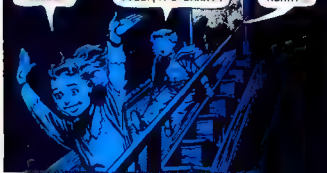
THE PARENTS CHUCKLED.

ONE BY ONE, THE CHILDREN SLID DOWN A SLIDE, WHICH MITCH HAD FIXED UP FROM TABLE SECTIONS, INTO THE DARK CELLAR. HE HISSED AND SHOUTED GHASTLY UTTERANCES AFTER THEM. A WONDERFUL WAILING FILLED THE DARK PUMPKIN-LIGHTED HOUSE. EVERYBODY TALKED AT ONCE. EVERYBODY BUT MARION. SHE'D GONE THROUGH THE PARTY WITH A MINIMUM OF SOUND. IT WAS ALL INSIDE HER, ALL OF THE EXCITEMENT AND JOY...

WEEEEEE

GOLLY, IT'S DARK...

HURRY



NOW, THE PARENTS. WITH LAUGHING RELUCTANCE THEY SLID DOWN THE INCLINE, UPROARIOUS, WHILE MARION STOOD BY, ALWAYS WANTING TO SEE IT ALL, TO BE THE LAST. LOUISE WENT DOWN WITHOUT MITCH'S HELP. MARION STOOD BY THE SLIDE. MITCH PICKED HER UP.

HERE WE GO



THEY SAT IN A VAST CIRCLE IN THE CELLAR. WARMTH CAME FROM THE DISTANT BULK OF THE FURNACE. THE CHAIRS STOOD IN A LONG LINE DOWN EACH WALL, TWENTY SQUEALING CHILDREN, TWELVE RUSTLING RELATIVES, ALTERNATELY SPACED. THEY HAD ALL GROPED TO THEIR CHAIRS IN THE BLACKNESS. THE ENTIRE PROGRAM FROM HERE ON WAS TO BE ENACTED IN THE DARK. HE AS MR. INTERLOCUTOR...



NOW! QUIET!

THERE WAS A SMELL OF DAMP CEMENT AND THE SOUND OF THE WIND OUT IN THE OCTOBER STARS. EVERYBODY SETTLED. THE ROOM WAS BLACK BLACK. NOT A LIGHT, NOT A SHINE, NOT A GLINT OF AN EYE. THERE WAS A SCRAPING OF CROCKERY, A METAL RATTLE. THE HUSBAND INTONED...

THE WITCH... IS DEAD.

TEE-HEE...



THE WITCH IS DEAD, SHE HAS BEEN KILLED, AND HERE IS THE KNIFE SHE WAS KILLED WITH.



HE HANDED OVER THE KNIFE. IT WAS PASSED FROM HAND TO HAND, DOWN AND AROUND THE CIRCLE, WITH CHUCKLES AND LITTLE ODD CRIES AND COMMENTS FROM THE ADULTS...

THE WITCH IS DEAD, AND THIS IS HER HEAD.



...WHISPERED THE HUSBAND, AND HANDED AN ITEM TO THE NEAREST PERSON.

SOME LITTLE CHILD CRIED HAPPILY IN THE DARK...

OH, I KNOW HOW *THIS* GAME IS PLAYED. HE GETS SOME OLD *CHICKEN* INNARDS AND HE HANDS THEM AROUND SAYING 'THESE ARE HER INNARDS!', AND HE MAKES A *GLAY* HEAD AND PASSES IT FOR HER HEAD, AND PASSES A *SOUP BONE* FOR HER ARM, AND HE TAKES A *MARBLE* AND SAYS, 'THIS IS HER EYE!', AND SOME *CORN* FOR HER TEETH AND A SACK OF *PLUMB PUDDING* AND GIVES THAT AND SAYS, 'THIS IS HER *STOMACH*!' I KNOW HOW *THIS* IS PLAYED!

HUSH, YOU'LL SPOIL EVERYTHING.



MITCH SAID...

THE WITCH CAME TO HARM, AND THIS IS HER ARM.

TEE-HEE...



THE ITEMS WERE PASSED AND PASSED, LIKE HOT POTATOES, AROUND THE CIRCLE. SOME CHILDREN SCREAMED, WOULDN'T TOUCH THEM. SOME RAN FROM THEIR CHAIRS TO STAND IN THE CENTER OF THE CELLAR UNTIL THE GRISLY ITEMS HAD PASSED. ONE BOY SCOFFED...

AW, IT'S ONLY *CHICKEN* INSIDES. COME BACK, HELEN!



SHOT FROM HAND TO HAND WITH SMALL SCREAM AFTER SCREAM, THE ITEMS WENT DOWN THE LINE, DOWN, DOWN, TO BE FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER AND ANOTHER. THE HUSBAND SAID...

THE WITCH IS CUT APART,
AND THIS IS HER HEART.



SIX OR SEVEN ITEMS MOVING AT ONCE THROUGH THE LAUGHING, TREMBLING DARK, LOUISE SPOKE UP...

MARION DON'T BE AFRAID: IT'S
ONLY PLAY.



MARION DIDN'T SPEAK, LOUISE
ASKED...

MARION?
ARE YOU AFRAID?

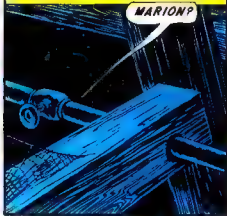
SHE'S ALL
RIGHT. SHE'S
NOT AFRAID.



...SAID THE HUSBAND. MARION
DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING...

ON AND ON THE PASSING, THE SCREAMS,
THE HILARITY. THE AUTUMN WIND
SIGHED ABOUT THE HOUSE. AND HE,
THE HUSBAND, STOOD IN THE DARK
CELLAR, INTONING THE WORDS, HANDING
OUT THE ITEMS. LOUISE'S VOICE CAME
AGAIN FROM FAR ACROSS THE CELLAR...

MARION?



EVERYBODY WAS TALKING...

MARION, ANSWER ME, ARE
YOU AFRAID?



EVERYBODY QUIETED...

MARION DIDN'T ANSWER. THE HUSBAND STOOD
THERE AT THE HEAD OF THE DARK CELLAR...
LOUISE CALLED...

MARION, ARE YOU THERE?



NO ANSWER. THE ROOM WAS SILENT...

WHERE'S MARION?

MAYBE SHE'S
UPSTAIRS?

MARION!



NO ANSWER... IT WAS QUIET

LOUISE CRIED OUT...

TURN ON THE LIGHTS!

MARION...
MARION...

THE ITEMS STOPPED PASSING. THE CHILDREN AND ADULTS SAT WITH THE WITCHES' ITEMS IN THEIR HANDS.

THERE WAS A SCRAPING OF A CHAIR, WILDLY, IN THE DARK.

LOUISE GASPED...

NO. NO, DON'T TURN ON THE LIGHTS,
DON'T TURN ON THE LIGHTS, OH GOD, GOD, GOD,
DON'T TURN THEM ON, PLEASE, PLEASE DON'T
TURN ON THE LIGHTS.
DON'T!

LOUISE WAS SHRIEKING NOW. THE ENTIRE CELLAR FROZE WITH THE SCREAM. NOBODY MOVED...

EVERYONE SAT SUSPENDED IN THE SUDDEN FROZEN TASK OF THIS OCTOBER GAME; THE WIND BLEW OUTSIDE, BANGING THE HOUSE. THE SMELL OF PUMPKINS AND APPLES FILLED THE ROOM WITH THE SMELL OF THE OBJECTS IN THEIR FINGERS WHILE ONE BOY CRIED...

I'LL GO UPSTAIRS AND LOOK!

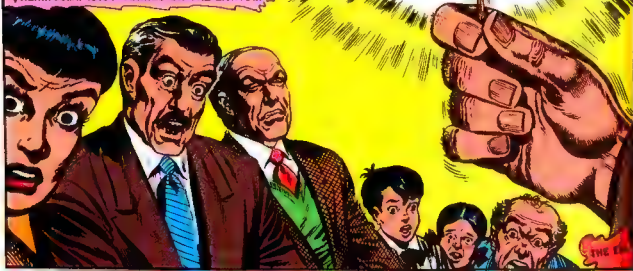
...AND HE RAN UPSTAIRS HOPEFULLY AND OUT AROUND THE HOUSE FOUR TIMES, AROUND THE HOUSE, CALLING...

MARION, MARION, MARION!

...AND AT LAST COMING SLOWLY DOWN THE STAIRS INTO THE WAITING, BREATHING CELLAR AND SAYING TO THE DARKNESS

I CAN'T FIND HER

THEN... SOME IDIOT TURNED ON THE LIGHTS...



THE FANS KEEP THE FLAME ALIVE

Comic book history is littered with forgotten titles and abandoned characters. *Tales from the Crypt* and the *Crypt Keeper* could have easily been among them, but for one factor—the fans. High school kids and college students who loved them kept the flame alive—older readers didn't have the time. At times the loyal supporters were down to a mere handful, but at several points along the way history took a lucky bounce that ensured that

Tales from the Crypt remained in the collective memory a little longer.

The period from 1955 to 1983 defines the low ebb in *Tales* history.

EC horror comics had disappeared from newsstands and drugstores and were for the most part forgotten, at least by the general public. But diehard EC fans remembered, largely because they didn't have any alternative. For them, the choice between buying the lobotomized Code-approved new comics and re-reading old favorites was, as it were, a no-brainer.

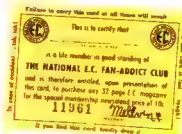
Before the Fall

The National E.C. Fan-Addict Club (a name that surely gave Dr. Wertham the willies) had been founded in summer 1953 and grew rapidly—by March of 1954, there were 17,700 members. The nation's president's name was "Melvin," a *nom de guerre* already well known to EC fans who read both the horror comics

and *MAD* magazine "National Headquarters"—i.e., EC offices on Lafayette Street in New York—sent off the pins and patches and ID cards, and encouraged readers to form local chapters, and many of them did. "Any group of five or more prospective members may join as an authorized chapter of the national organization. Each such chapter will be assigned a charter number. The name and address of the elected president of each authorized chapter will be made available to all members, so that those who are not already a member of a chapter will be able to join the one nearest them if they wish to."

The "National Headquarters" wasn't the least bit proprietary about being the only fan publication. The September 1954 *Fan-Addict Club Bulletin* listed four other fan publications: *Potrzebie*, *E.C. Fan Journal*, *E.C. Slime Sheet*, and

The *MAD* sense of humor thoroughly permeated the EC sensibility—note that the membership card is "invalid if signed."





From the old artist spotlights and fan-addict bulletins, EC readers were already familiar with the names and faces of their favorite artists. Fanzine editors kept in touch with them for interviews and "where are they now?" updates.

Jerry Weist on Becoming a Professional Fan

When I was in elementary school, a friend of mine in Battle Creek, Michigan, offered me seven EC comics for \$1.50. I happened to be sick in bed with the flu the day they arrived. My mother brought me the package and it blew my mind. My friend Roger Hill and I began a methodical search. By not spending our lunch money, doing lawns and other odd jobs, within two and a half years, we had nearly everything. We were fanatical. I used to come home every



Weist with Bill Gaines in 1987.

day from grade school and run to get my mail, which was set at the end of the hall. At that time, I was looking for packages either from Claude Held in Ohio or Bill Thailing or

Howard Rogofsky or Phil Seuling in New York. If there wasn't a manila envelope waiting for me, I'd take my schoolbooks and throw them the entire length of the hall.

By the time Roger and I graduated from high school in 1967, we had complete collections, and were planning our first trip to New York City to visit Bill Gaines, who was our hero. We'd already called Harvey Kurtzman and Bill Elder and Johnny Craig.

If someone had said to me when I graduated from high school, "You're going to make your living doing one of two things: either you're going to become an astronaut and go to the moon, or you'll work for this venerable old English auction house called Sotheby's, and hold auctions of old comic books that bring in one to two million dollars a year," I would have said, "My God! I'm going to be an astronaut—I'm going to the moon!"

When economic reality forced Gaines to drop *Tales* and the other horror titles, many readers were left with a profound feeling of loss. Fans who had been immersed in the EC family spirit mourned when the issues stopped coming—it was as if a member of the family had died. For the most fervent EC fans—and there were many—it was a bit like the death of Elvis.

Carrying the Torch

In withdrawal, EC fan-addicts reacted the way many fans do when a well-loved celebrity dies suddenly in his prime: they made shrines and venerated artifacts from the past. For several years after the end of *Tales from the Crypt*, the fanzines served as links among the faithful. Run off on mimeographs or hectographs, the homegrown fanzines revered not just EC's horror magazines but the science fiction titles as well. They were a place where fans could swap anecdotes and talk about their favorite stories and artists. In short, they were an ongoing printed wake. For EC that was appropriate, since in 1956 it was almost in the grave itself.

MAD was the only bright hope, and its sales were strong. Gaines was convinced that the key to *MAD*'s success was Harvey Kurtzman. At about the same time that Kelauev was bearing down on comic books, Kurtzman was offered a job with *Pagant* magazine, which had recently done a feature story on the *MAD* phenomenon. Harvey had coveted the idea of working for a "legitimate" magazine, or "slick" as it was known in the publishing business, and was about to defect. Fearing that he would lose Kurtzman, Gaines offered to change *MAD* from a comic book to a magazine if Harvey would stay at EC. Kurtzman accepted, and with issue #24 (July 1955), *MAD* changed format from a full-color comic book to a black-and-white magazine.



Bill was nervous about the transition, but the first issue of *MAD* as a magazine was so popular that they had to go back for a second printing—a rarity in magazine publishing.

ORIGINAL



crime



PICTO-FICTION MAGAZINE

Horror and Suspense

ILLUSTRATED



Introducing...
PICTO-FICTION
 a new form of
 ADULT ENTERTAINMENT

Adult Tales of

TERROR

Horror and Suspense

ILLUSTRATED



Introducing...

ORIGINAL



Confessions

PICTO-FICTION

ADULT ROMANCES ILLUSTRATED



Introducing...
PICTO-FICTION
 a new form of
 ADULT ENTERTAINMENT

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 MAGAZINE

SHOCK

Adult Psychoanalytical Tales
ILLUSTRATED



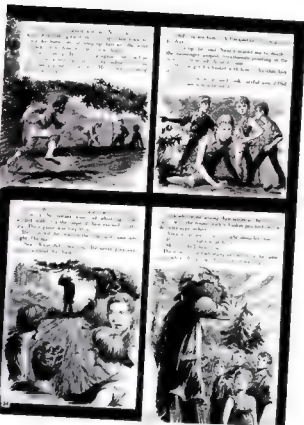
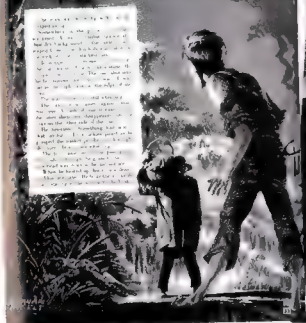
Introducing a new form of
 ADULT ENTERTAINMENT.
PICTO-FICTION

Picto-Fiction

Coincidentally, by becoming a magazine rather than remaining a comic book, *MAD* escaped from Judge Murphy's little old ladies and their odious scissors. Gaines always maintained that he made the change to keep Kurtzman rather than to get out

from under the CMAA code, but the idea that one could mutate a successful comic book into a successful magazine was not lost on him. In the summer of 1955 he started up four new magazines, dubbed *Adult Picto-Fiction*. He priced them at a quarter apiece (just like *MAD* magazine)

THE BASKET



al printed them in black and white rather than in color. To further distinguish them from comics, narrative text ran at the top of each panel in lieu of dialogue balloons. The magazines featured stories and artwork by Feldstein and other veterans from the other horror comics. Called *Terror Illustrated*, *Shock Illustrated*, *Crime Illustrated*, and *Confessions Illustrated*, the titles of the magazines left no doubt that Gaines was aiming for the large market of horror lovers that the Code had forced him to abandon.

It wasn't a bad idea; it just didn't work. The *Adult Picto-Fiction* magazines were commercial failures. Early in 1956, it was clear that they would have to be abandoned. Indeed, it had been clear at Christmastime 1955 that they were doomed, but Gaines refused to give anyone the bad news during the holidays. As the new year dawned, Gaines with great sadness was forced to lay off much of his staff, including Al Feldstein and most of the artists—anyone who was not involved with *MAD*. Only a skeleton crew working with Harvey Kurtzman remained, and their future was in doubt. Reluctantly, Gaines also let his friend and business manager, Lyle Stuart, go. The

creative but free-spending Kurtzman had a terminal personality conflict with Stuart, whose difficult job it was to guard the very endangered bottom line.

Flat Broke

It was not a good time to be without a business manager. The end of *New Direction* was followed closely by the failure of EC's distributor, Leader News. In January of 1956, Leader News went bankrupt, leaving Gaines holding an empty sack where \$100,000 should have been. Worse yet, he owed this \$100,000 that he did not have to his printer and friend, George Dougherty. The coffers were completely empty—there wasn't enough money to bind the 250,000-copy run of *Shock Illustrated* #3 that had already been printed. All 250,000 were destroyed, except for one or two hundred that were hand-bound for posterity. (*Shock Illustrated* #3 is now the Hope Diamond of EC collectibles.)

It was bitterly ironic that EC in 1956 was in exactly the same financial condition—\$100,000 in the hole—that it had been

Al Feldstein wrote many of the *Picto-Fiction* stories, sometimes under the nom de plume Alfred E. Neuman. This story, "The Basket," was recycled from *Haunt of Fear* #7.



"MAD needed a mascot," says Al Feldstein. "Harvey had this character with the goofy grin, but he was just in the border on the cover. Norman Mingo painted his portrait, but I had to give him a name. Alfred E. Neuman was an EC house pseudonym. I put the name with the kid's picture and we ran him as a write-in candidate for president."



What, me gory? Gaines and Feldstein, the gruesome twosome, are okay, but that guy in the middle, Aldead E. Sleuman, is a real stiff!

when Bill Gaines had taken over after his father's death in 1947. Without a cash transfusion, there was no way to print the next issue of *MAD*, which was now his only profit center. If they didn't print, there not only was no *MAD*, there was no EC either. In order to go to press, Bill and Harvey went hat in hand to see Jessie Gaines, Bill's mother, who owned 50 percent of EC. After the visit, she and Bill each put \$50,000 of their own money into the business to keep it afloat.

The visit must have been more than a little uncomfortable for Kurtzman, who was once again flirting with departure. *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner wanted to start a comic humor magazine, and was courting

recalls the emergency phone call he received from a sheepish but panicked Bill Gaines.

"Lyle, I'm in trouble," Bill said.

"What's wrong, Bill?" I asked.

"I know I don't have the right to ask you anything," Bill continued, "but..."

"Come on...but what?" I said

"Well, Harvey Kurtzman is outside, and he said if I don't give him 51 percent of *MAD*, he's quitting."

So I said, "What floor are you on, the seventh or the eighth?"

Bill said, "I the seventh."

"Good," I said. "You've got the big picture windows behind you. Open the window, go out, get Kurtzman, and throw him out the window."

Bill began laughing in spite of himself, then took a deep breath.

"Seriously, Lyle, what do I do?"

"Bill, I am serious," I replied. "Do what I tell you. Throw Kurtzman out the window!"

He said, "Then what do I do?"

"Get another editor."

"Who?"

"Get Feldstein back," I said.

"Do you think he can do it?" Bill asked

"Why not? He did fine with *Panic*—and he was putting out seven other magazines at the same time."

Harvey left with Bill's foot propelling him from the rear.

What was particularly painful for Gaines was that Bill Elder and Jack Davis followed

Harvey to work for Hefner. With the deadline for the next issue fast approaching, Gaines needed an editor for *MAD*.

Lyle Stuart was perhaps the first person to tell him to seek out Al Feldstein, but he wasn't the last. Bill's new bride, Nancy (who had worked in the subscription department of the old comics), gave him the same advice, as did artist Joe Orlando. Hearing the same counsel from three people he trusted, Bill sought out Al once again.

Feldstein had been out of work for about four months. He had spruced up his portfolio and had pounded the pavement looking to hook up with another comic book publisher. Now he was finally on the brink of landing a new position. He was one meeting away from clinching this new job when he got off the Long Island Railroad after having spent the day in Manhattan. Emerging from the train at his stop in Merrick, he saw Bill Gaines' familiar Michelin-man silhouette waiting for him on the platform.

Kurtzman ardently. In April of 1956, after putting out five issues of *MAD* as a magazine and just a couple of months after helping convince Gaines *must* let him throw \$100,000 into EC, Harvey was sure enough of his future with Hefner that he risked a confrontation with Gaines over control of *MAD*.

Like a tenant who had lived in the building so long he thought he'd earned the deed to his own apartment, Kurtzman demanded a controlling interest in *MAD*. Gaines offered him 10 percent, but was offended not just by Kurtzman's power play but by its timing.

Fired by Bill Gaines, largely at Harvey Kurtzman's behest, Lyle Stuart was in Florida to escape the New York winter and the sting of his separation from EC. He still clearly



The Bill & Al Show, Part II



Feldstein took up the reins at *MAD* with little if any loss of momentum. The major stumbling block was not the absence of Kurtzman, but the departure of Elder and Davis. Gaines and Feldstein set about building yet another stable of quality artists who, like the EC artists from the early days, would be given star billing in the magazine.

Beginning with horror/science fiction survivors Wally Wood and Joe Orlando, the "usual gang of idiots" they assembled—Don Martin, Antonio Prohias, Sergio Aragones, Dave Berg, Norman Mingo, and Kelly Freas, among others—gave *MAD* its distinctive look and feel and brought it to its peak of popularity. In 1959 *MAD* was the favorite magazine of 58 percent of U.S. college students and 43 percent of high school kids.

By the early 1960s, as America headed into space and into JFK's "New Frontier," *MAD* under Feldstein was soaring, but the memory of the EC horror comics had faded—along with the controversy they engendered. Although the first generation of fanzines had petered out and most fan addicts were in hibernation, the world climate was certainly similar to that in which *Tales from the Crypt* and the other EC comics had first flourished. Horror was making a strong showing in other media—Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*

were popular television shows, and Hitchcock's *Psycho* was one of the top films of 1960.

The horror comeback may have been due to the ongoing terrors of the Cold War, but every day there was horror on the daily news—fugitive Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann was captured in Argentina; Cuban exiles were massacred as they invaded their homeland at the Bay of Pigs, babies with flippers instead of arms were being born to women who took Thalidomide during pregnancy. We began being pulled into the 'lar Baby that became Vietnam. But everyday horror was never more terrifying than the events of November 1963, when Americans got to watch the televised murder of a President and the strange events that followed over and over and over in slow motion.

Then in 1964, two events occurred that rekindled interest in comics in general and EC comics in particular. The first comic book convention was held in New York City, bringing comic book aficionados and collectors together for the first time. Then in December of that year, New York publisher Ian Ballantine issued reprints of old EC comics. (Ballantine had previously reprinted early issues of the comic book version of *MAD*.) His first was *Tales from the Crypt*. Reprints from the EC science fiction comics, which Ballantine called *Tales of the Incredible*, followed four months later, and in August 1965, Ballantine brought out *The Vault of Horror*.

Although they were printed in black and white, the Ballantine reprints introduced a new generation of readers to EC comics.

Ballantine successfully published reprints of *MAD* comic book issues and other EC properties.



Passing the Torch

One of those who took up the torch was Jerry Weist, who learned of EC comics not from the Ballantine reprints, but from a friend who sold him a handful of them for the exorbitant sum of \$1.50. Just a couple of months after graduating from high school in June of 1967, Weist started up *Squa Tront*, which remains by reputation the best second-generation fanzine. Weist put out four issues; with Issue #5 (1974) he relinquished the editor's chair to John Benson. Other second-generation fanzines included *Spa Fun* (1966-1969), and *The E.C. Fan-Addict* (later renamed *Seraphim*) (1967-1970).

Another torchbearer was Russ Cochran, one of the original EC Fan-Addicts. Now a tenured professor at Drake University, in 1965 he was set to attend a convention of physics teachers in New York. Fondly remembering his fan-addict days, Cochran wrote Bill Gaines, filling him in on what had happened to the members of Chapter #3 of the E.C. Fan-Addict Club, West Plains, MO. Among the E.C. alumni were two college professors, a physician, and a minister—

not an axe murderer in the bunch. Gaines was tickled by the letter and wrote back inviting Cochran to drop in at the MAD offices and indulge in his favorite activity: breaking bread over a bottle of good wine. It was, as Bogey and Claude Rains said to one another at the end of *Casablanca*, the beginning of a beautiful friendship.



Weist established a high standard for EC scholarship and showed real flair as an editor in his issues of *Squa Tront*.

Derived from the exclamations of Martians in *Weird Science* stories, the titles *Squa Tront* and *Spa Fun* were also rumored to be scatological acronyms.

SERAPHIM

NO. 5

SPA FUN

1000



Russ Cochran: Leader of the West Plains Fan-Addict Club

When I saw my first EC comic, I was fourteen. I lived in the small town of West Plains, Missouri, in the days before television. Comic books were what I existed on. I read the superhero comics, Captain Marvel, Superman, Batman, and the rest, and the crime comics that came out in the late '40s. By the time I was about 14, which was in 1951, I thought I had passed my comic reading stage until one day I happened upon an EC comic—I think the first one I ever saw was a copy of *Haunt of Fear*. I immediately recognized that the level of writing, the level of artwork, and the O. Henry type endings were very different from what I'd seen before. I loved it right away. I thought, "This is unique."

When the E.C. Fan-Addict Club was formed in 1953, my two younger brothers and I, together with about four other boys in the neighborhood, formed Chapter #3. In my capacity as president I went down to the hardware store and got a wooden shotgun shell box, a couple of hinges, a hasp, and a padlock. I made a locked wood box that held two stacks of EC comics perfectly. Every week we would have a meeting of our chapter. We would ceremoniously unlock the box, and take the comics out. We would sit in a circle, pass the comics around, and read and re-read and re-read them.



Cochran with Buck, one of his three chimpanzees.

Tales from an English Crypt

In 1971 Amicus Films (a partnership between Max Rosenberg and Milton Subotsky) approached Bill Gaines about putting out a film version of *Tales from the Crypt*. He was charmed by Rosenberg's literate wit, and Gaines gave his approval for *Tales from the Crypt*, which was released in 1972. Amicus had already produced *D. H. Lawrence's House of Horror* (1964) and *Bizarre Garden* (1967), both of which had been directed by British director Freddie Francis. Francis took on similar duties for *Tales from the Crypt*, working from a script by Subotsky. Before becoming a director, Francis had been an outstanding cinematographer, working on such highly regarded films as *Room at the Top* (1959) and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960). He won an Oscar for cinematography for his work on the film adaptation of D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1930).

In keeping with the format of the comic book, the *Tales* movie was a group of stories that were linked together by the narration of the on-screen host, the Crypt Keeper. Starring as the Crypt Keeper was distinguished British actor Ralph Richardson (eventually to become Sir Ralph). Oddly enough, Richardson's first credited screen work was in a 1933 British film called *The Ghoul*, which starred William Henry Platt, whose stage name happened to be Boris Karloff. Unfortunately, Richardson in *Tales* looks much more like a dignified but eccentric old abbot than the Ghouliamatic created by Feldstein and refined by Jack Davis. Indeed, the Keeper's "Crypt of Terror" is the same grim sanctorum of an ancient monastery, and not nearly as sinister as the dark and scary crypt that many had conjured up in their imaginations while reading the comic book.

The first story in the film is "And All Through the House" originally depicted in *Vault of Horror* #35, Feb./Mar. '54, with story and art by Johnny Craig. The tale stars Joan Collins (taking her first steps to revive her career after her divorce from singer Anthony Newley, but very much pre-Alexis Carrington) as a woman who finds herself stalked by a psychopath after having murdered her husband on Christmas Eve. She is unwittingly done in when her child opens the door to the maniac, who has suited himself up as St. Nicholas. "Reflection of Death," the second story (*Tales from the Crypt* #23, Apr./May '51, Feldstein story and artwork), is the saga of a man who has forsaken his wife and children. On his way to rendezvous with his mistress, he is killed in an auto accident, becoming a grisly walking corpse. Or is he? The cad awakens in his car to find that this has all been a nightmare—except that his car is now hurtling headlong toward an inevitable crash. (Chalk up another behind-the-scenes credit for Ambrose Bierce.)

Joan Collins' first Christmas gift to herself, a dead husband, was also her last.



New York magazine found the gore in *Tales from the Crypt* too graphic, making the movie fit only for "those with cast-iron stomachs and short memories."

Sir Ralph's Crypt Keeper bore absolutely no resemblance to either the Feldstein or the Davis version.



"Poetic Justice" (*Haunt of Fear* #12, Mar-Apr '52; Feldstein Ingels), featured horror megastar Peter Cushing as an elderly widower who hangs himself after being pressured to sell his property to the town's richest man and his son. He then rises from his grave on Valentine's Day to haunt his enemies as a ghostly spectre. The fourth

story, "Wish You Were Here" (*Haunt of Fear* #23, Nov-Dec '53; Feldstein Ingels) is a reinterpretation of the "Monkey's Paw," or a takeoff on the old "three wishes" folktale. A woman is granted three wishes. Her first, for money, results in the death of her husband. Her second, for his return, brings her a zombie spouse. Her third, for his eternal

Makeup artists achieved a remarkable similarity between Peter Cushing in full regalia for the movie version of "Poetic Justice" and this Feldstein drawing in "Reflection of Death."



Cushing was one of horror's leading men, having achieved stardom in numerous Hammer productions in the 1950s.

Director Freddie Francis on the First Tales from the Crypt Movie

Academy Award winner Freddie Francis used his connections with the British film industry to bring noted actors and quality technical staff into what was essentially a low-budget production. "I insisted on key people with whom I'd worked previously. It was rather difficult because as a cameraman, the films that I'd photographed before were in a much more expensive category. It was often difficult to persuade people to work on these horror films, but we managed to get a few."

Tales from the Crypt was shot in about thirty days, and a lot of it was a bit more improvisational than Francis might have liked:

"Max [Rosenberg] and Milton [Subotsky] would budget a film and try to raise the money for it. Eventually somebody would offer them about half or two-thirds of what they needed and they would go ahead and begin production, then raise the rest as they went along. I was always presented with scripts that were about half as long as they should be, so I'd have to set about adding scenes, sometimes even as we were shooting. We had some fun doing **Tales**, but it was always a real shoestring operation."

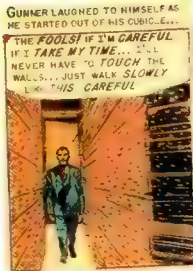
Since the film was an anthology of short stories, each with a different cast, none of the actors was involved for more than a week.

"We had Ralph Richardson for two days and things were going slightly awry because the script was much too short. We made it up as we went along, and dear old Ralph didn't mind. I used to keep going along and apologizing to him, but he was quite happy in his dressing room, reading his books. We actually used just a half day of real shooting...to shoot just dialogue with Ralph didn't take any time at all."

Francis would have much preferred to keep more of the same sense of tongue-in-cheek humor in the **Tales** movie that made the EC comics so distinctive—but to do that he had to wait another twenty-four years. In a classic, EC-style, what goes around/comes around ending, in late 1995 Francis directed a segment of the **Tales from the Crypt** HBO series called "Last Respects." Working with actresses Emma Samms, Kerry Fox, and Julie Cox, Francis was finally able to be faithful to the campy humor of the originals. "I thought to myself, I deliberately don't do horror films now, but my God, if I could get a script like this and three actresses like these, I'd go back to doing them."



life—condemns him to perpetual dyspepsia as embalming fluid corrodes his innards. The role of the hapless, long-suffering husband was played by wash-buckling hero Richard Greene, perhaps best known to U.S. audiences as TV's Robin Hood. The final morality tale, "Blind Alley" (*Tales from the Crypt* # 16, Feb./Mar. '55, drawn by George Evans), is that of the retribution of a group of residents of a Dickensian home for the blind against their cruel overseer: The callous superintendent (Nigel Patrick) is literally backed onto the horns of a most distasteful dilemma by the vengeful inmates. To avoid being dismembered by his faithful slaving dog, Brutus, who has been starved by the men, he must walk or run down an exceedingly narrow corridor lined by the very finest double-edged razor blades Gillette can offer.



In the comic, Evans and Feldstein let the reader imagine the superintendent's gruesome fate. The film made it explicit.



Feldstein and Gaines were both present at the gala preview of *Vault of Horror*, but were disappointed by the result.

Bizarrely enough, none of the segments in the *Vault of Horror* film came from the *Vault of Horror* comic books.



In 1973, Amicus released a sequel entitled (of course) *Vault of Horror*.

It showcased a first-rate cast that included Terry-Thomas, Glynis Johns, Curt Jurgens, Denholm Elliott, and the Massey's Daniel and Anna—the son and daughter of distinguished character actor Raymond (Dr. Gillespie to Richard Chamberlain's Dr. Kildare) Massey.



Vault of Horror director Roy Ward worked from Joe Orlando's panels in "Midnight Mess" to block out his scenes.

In "Midnight Mess" (originally from *Tales from the Crypt* #35, Apr./May '53, Feldstein/Orlando), the first *Vault of Horror* tale, the sibling Masseys play (natch) brother and sister. After Daniel murders Sis, he dines out in a vampire restaurant and finds his jugular tapped as a beverage dispenser. "Neat Job" (*Shock SuspenStories* #1, Feb./Mar. '52, Feldstein/Kamen) has the fidgety Terry Thomas as a compulsively tidy man (as was Gaines himself), whose obsession drives his spouse (Glynis Johns) to take extreme measures. After dispatching his soul to the great beyond, she fastidiously dismembers his parts and files them in well-labeled jars. "This Trick'll Kill You" (*Tales from the Crypt* #33, Dec./Jan. '52, Feldstein/Evans & Kamen) features a magician (Curt Jurgens) and his assistant (American starlet Dawn Addams, in her last screen appearance) whose quest to obtain a rope trick from a rival eventually results in their own grisly demise. In "Bargain in Death" (*Tales from the Crypt* #28 Feb./Mar. '52, Feldstein/Davis), a man who takes his own death in order to bilk his insurance company discovers that the joke is on him when he finds himself permanently in the hereafter. In "Drawn and Quartered" (*Tales from the Crypt* #26,

Oct./Nov. '51, Feldstein/Davis) an artist who had been cheated gets revenge on his enemies by using voodoo to disfigure their portraits, at least until turpentine is spilled on his own self-portrait and he's flattened by a truck.

Vault of Horror was directed by Roy Ward Baker, perhaps best known for *A Night to Remember* (1958), a documentary-style film of Walter Lord's book about the sinking of the *Titanic*. *Vault* was not as artistically or commercially successful as *Tales*, and Gaines, who had been particularly impressed by the photography of the first film (not surprising, considering Francis' background as a cinematographer), was reportedly unhappy with it. He did, however, share the proceeds he received from the production of both films with the artists and writers of that time—something he was under no legal obligation to do. He even sent money to Harvey Kurtzman, who'd worked very little in horror: Gaines, however, thought he owed him a percentage since he'd been third in command at EC at the time.

Bizarrely enough, *Tales from the Crypt* was not the first film made from an EC comic. In 1966, Al Feldstein went to an art movie house in New York and watched in fascination as one of his stories, "Gone Fishing" (*Vault of Horror* #22), unreleased as a French-produced short film called *The Fisherman*. Feldstein called Gaines and said, "Hey, Bill, we've been ripped off." Perhaps mindful of his early unauthorized adaptation experiences with Ray Bradbury, and Bradbury's gentlemanly response, Gaines contacted the producers—what he was after was less financial compensation than proper recognition. Eventually the producers added an "adapted from EC Comics" credit and gave both Feldstein and Gaines a copy of the film

Glynis Johns' role as a murderess and spouse dismemberer is a radical departure from her portrayal of Mrs. Banks, the sweet but ditzy suffragette mother in *Mary Poppins*.



A Boondoggle Made in Heaven

The release of *Tales from the Crypt* and *Vault of Horror* corresponded with the crest of a tidal wave of new interest in EC comics, a wave generated in large measure by the activities of the fan-addicts.

Throughout the mid- to late 1960s, Russ Cochran and Bill Gaines played out their own version of *Same Time Next Year* as Cochran's junkie to New York, ostensibly for the physics teacher's convention, but more an annual affair. Instead of attending lectures and seminars, Cochran the physics professor and Gaines the almost-chemistry teacher played hooky together. On one of these boondoggles, Cochran caught sight of some original EC artwork, which Gaines had pulled from the archives for the 1971 book *Horror Comics of the 1950s*, also called *The EC Horror Library* (Nostalgia Press), published by Woody Gelman and edited by Bhub Stewart (one of the earliest fan-addicts) and Ron Barlow. Cochran was struck by how much better the artwork looked in its original oversize form and asked permission from Gaines to put out a large portfolio, about the size of a tabloid newspaper, containing some of the most outstanding examples of EC artwork.

Gaines happily consented, and the physics professor was quickly in the publishing business. Cochran's *EC Portfolio* (the first of six) came out in 1971. By 1977, he had reproduced 27 covers and 29 stories. Selling them at comic book conventions all over the country, Cochran demonstrated a real market for EC artwork. In addition



In these Graphic Masters posters (above) and Cochran's portfolios (right), artists' details that had not been visible in the cheaply printed comic books emerged. These posters and portfolios are now collectors' items.



In 1973, the first East Coast Comics reprint was a comic which would have been the first issue of EC's fourth horror title. Gaines was planning to resuscitate *Crypt of Terror* (the original title of *Tales from the Crypt*), but when censorship problems became oppressive, he published the contents as the last *Tales from the Crypt* in 1953.

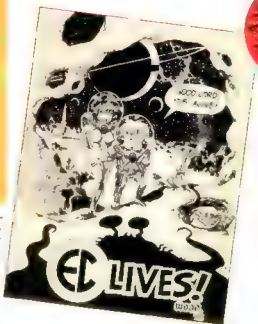


to Cochran's portfolios and the Nostalgia Press book, there was a *Haunt of Fear* poster reprint (published by Cochran), duplicate versions of the old EC Fan-Addict kits, put out by Dave Gabson (1971), more posters published by Graphic Masters (Bruce Hershenson and Ron Barlow), and *EC Classic Reprints* (1973-75), published by East Coast Comix — another Barlow and Hershenson venture.

Barlow and Hershenson also collaborated on an event that amounted to an EC reunion, 1972 E.C. Fan-Addict Convention. The enterprising pair rented a ballroom at New York's Hotel McAlpin for Memorial Day weekend and invited Gaines, Feldstein, all the EC artists, and anyone else who had been directly or tangentially involved with EC fandom. Amazingly enough, they all showed up (except Graham Ingels). A registration fee of \$7.50 bought you access to the dealers' room, seminars with the artists, a screening of the new British *Tales from the Crypt* movie, and Harvey Kuntzman's home movies of the 1953 EC Halloween party and boat cruise.

What happened, of course, was true bonding — the hands that wrote the stories and drew the artwork shook the hands of the fans who loved a People who had been speaking to one another by phone for years finally met face-to-face. As Russ Cochran recalls, "I've never there was as nutty as I was. We all had a total immersion in EC comics for four days. It was fabulous."

The 1972 convention was the Woodstock of Tales from the Crypt.



The convention proved that old EC gospel — what goes around, comes around. With the Vault Keeper giggling over *Seduction of the Innocent* (long disregarded as a serious work), and new Wally Wood artwork for the brochure, the convention proved that Potrzebie's Revenge was at hand.



The Complete Reprints

In 1978, after having successfully put out six portfolios, Russ Cochran was no longer content to publish merely highlights or bits and pieces of the EC *oeuvre*. He now wanted to go after the complete works. With Games' authorization, he began publishing the entire EC library, from the pre-*Trend* comics like *Crime Patrol*, *Moon Girl*, and *War Against Crime* through the horror and science fiction titles, *MAD* as a comic, its spinoff, *Panic*, the short-lived *New Direction* comics like *Aces High* and *Parody*, all the way to the ill-fated *Adult Picto-Fiction*. The first volumes, the complete *Weird Science*, appeared in 1979, the last were published in 1995.

Cochran published his comics in handsomely bound hardcover volumes in an oversized format. Except for the covers, which were in full color, the interiors were in black and white so that the artists' line work, obscured in the original size by the smaller size and cheap printing quality, would be more visible. Gaines gave Cochran access to the originals in the Second Avenue vault in

preparing the reprints. Printed on quality paper, the comics appeared almost exactly as they had in the 1950s, with the addition of commentary and anecdotes by Cochran and other fan-addicts, including Bob Stewart and *Squa Front* editor John Burson, among others. Some of this explanatory text had originally appeared in *Squa Front*; Cochran supplemented this information with additional material from Frank Jacobs' 1973 biography of Bill Gaines, which had been published by former EC business manager Lyle Stuart.

Cochran, however, did not print directly from the artists' originals. Instead, he and Gaines had the artwork meticulously photographed, and the books were prepared from slides. Once this task was accomplished, Bill Gaines felt that he could finally part with the now quarter-century-old original illustration boards.

Russ Cochran resigned as head of the Drake University physics department and bought a vintage building in his old hometown of West Plains, which has become the capital of a bustling business in EC hardcover reprints.

The Comic Art Auctions

Games asked Cochran to handle the sales. His first EC comic book auctions were held in 1979.

When they began, no one quite knew what to expect, but Cochran's auctions demonstrated that a lively market existed for original comic art. Bill Gaines had caught another wave, this time one of nostalgia.

Why were the auctions so successful in the early 1980s? It was a time when the United States was taking its lumps internationally. The Ayatollah had taken the reins of power in Iran, terrorist incidents in the Middle East were frequent, and the U.S. seemed powerless to cope with them. The Sandinistas were thumbing their noses at us in Nicaragua. Americans in record numbers deserted Detroit for less expensive and better made Hondas and Toyotas. More prosperous car owners scorned Cadillacs and Chryslers in favor of Beemers and Mercedes. In household goods, Sony and Panasonic owned valuable American brands like RCA, GE, and Sylvania in everything from TVs to toaster ovens. We forsook hamburgers and roast beef for yuppie chow like radicchio, arugula, goat cheese, and asparagus vinaigrette, because "everyone knew" that the world's best cuisine came from France and Italy.

As it became tough to name more than five things that America still did better than

anyone else in the world, naturally enough we began looking back to a simpler time, when U.S. preeminence was unquestioned. Although it had been a Broadway musical the 1978 movie *Grease*, with John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John, epitomized the affection that people held for the Eisenhower era—even those who were too young to remember it firsthand. From the comparative safety of the early 1980s, it was

easy to don rose-colored glasses and gloss over the duck and cover A-bomb drills and the communist witchhunts in order to recall the poodle skirts, the Chevies, do-wop, and *I Love Lucy*.

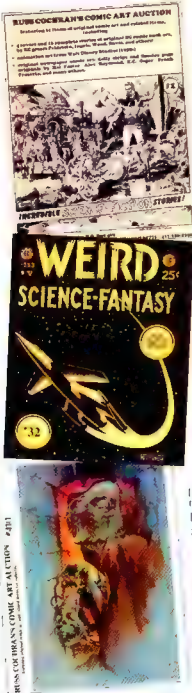
In the early '80s, Boomers and Pre-Boomers looked back fondly on their disappearing youth as they plucked their first gray hairs, and were prosperous enough to buy some of their childhood back. Yard sales, tag sales, and flea markets proliferated as the collectibles business mushroomed. Lake Bristow and 3-D movies, comic books were part of the "good stuff" that people remembered about the 1970s.

The film version of *Superman*, starring Christopher Reeve, came out in the same year as *Grease* and demonstrated the enduring popularity of the Man of Steel. As comic book art prices began to skyrocket, eventually Sotheby's, the distinguished auction house, took over the auctions from Russ Cochran, with longtime fan-addict and former *Night Train* editor Jerry Weiss serving as house consultant.

The Stage Is Set

All in all it was a remarkable transformation. From 1956 to 1989, *Tales from the Crypt* had mutated from a drug on the market to a cult favorite to a hot collectible property. The stage was set for the next step, the return of *Tales from the Crypt* and the reintroduction of the Crypt Keeper to television audiences.

*Necro-Ghouldwyn-Mayhem,
here I come! I'm ready for my
gross-up, Mr. Silver.
Heh, heh, heh.*



As Gaines released the original art for sale, Russ Cochran prepared catalogs and sent them to interested collectors.

Like its comic book predecessor, the HBO series *Tales from the Crypt* is a labor of love. Since its inception, many top actors and directors have worked for scale just to be involved in the grisly glee. Before it could become a labor of love, however, it was a labor of persistence and determination. In an industry where getting anything made is difficult, it took the influence and backing of five of the most powerful figures in Hollywood to bring *Tales from the Crypt* to television.

A STAR IS... EXHUMED

TALES RESURRECTED ON TV

The reason people love *Tales from the Crypt* is that they're funny and they're gruesome. They're like a guilty pleasure that appeals to the dark side, the murderous rage that every human has in them.

They give you a healthy outlet to take pleasure in that fantasy, a pleasure we all enjoy, even though we don't want to admit it.

That's what Gaines and Feldstein did in the comic books, and that's what we wanted translated very specifically to the screen.

The episodes had to be stylish, full of irony and satire and black humor; and a lot of that humor comes from the fact that there were characters who had absolutely no redeeming value—the more despicable the characters, the better. At the very first screening when we unveiled the first three episodes, Joel Silver stood up and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is *Tales from the Crypt*.

This is **not** *Tales from Sesame Street*."

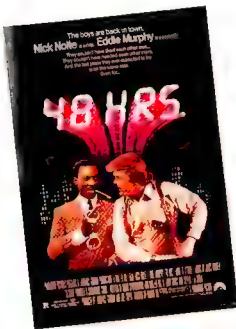
—Robert Zemeckis



First There Were Two

Director and *Tales* executive producer Walter Hill grew up reading the originals. "I was a great fan of EC comics when I was a kid—much to the despair of my mother," he reminisces fondly. "I used to collect them; I was about twelve when they got into trouble with Senator Kefauver and the committee, but I still loved them. One of my ambitions was to get into the comic book world. It was everything I wanted to do. I thought it would be a great life to make up these wild stories, write them, and draw them."

Intent on becoming a cartoonist, Hill briefly embarked on a course of study at the University of the Americas in Mexico City, but returned to the States and settled for a degree in English instead. For several years he drifted in and out of documentary film work before becoming the second assistant



Walter Hill's *48HRS*, starring Nick Nolte and Eddie Murphy, put a new twist on the "buddy" picture.

It was hideously clever of the five executive prod-oozers to bring me back to life, don't you think?

director on *Bullitt* (1968), where he found himself responsible for civilian safety during the landmark breakneck chase sequence through the streets of San Francisco. After writing McQueen's hit film *The Getaway* (1972), he landed his first directing assignment, an action movie called *Hard Times* (1975), starring Charles Bronson and James Coburn. Since that time Hill has directed action films in a wide variety of settings, most notably the Nick Nolte/Eddie Murphy buddy pics *48HRS* and *Another 48HRS*, and *The Long Riders*. His film *The Warriors* (1979), which he calls "a comic book version of Xenophon's story" set amidst the gang turf wars of New York, was falsely blamed for a wave of violent episodes in theaters that accompanied the screenings (an accusation that in many ways paralleled the bum rap the original EC comics got for causing juvenile delinquency). Hill also produced the three box office horror/science fiction successes *Alien*, *Aliens*, and *Alien³*, and is working on bringing a fourth *Alien* to the screen. His most recent film is *Last Man Standing*, starring Bruce Willis and Bruce Dern.

Hill was directing features at Universal in the early 1980s when he became aware of Russ Cochran's hardcover reprints of the old EC comics, and sent off for a complete set.

When they arrived, he found that they were as enjoyable as they'd been in his childhood. From his adult perspective as a director, however, he now realized that the stories also contained a wealth of material that would translate well to the screen. He showed them to his partner, writer/director/producer David Giler (*The Black Bird*, *Fun with Dick & Jane*, *Parallax View*, and, with Hill, the *Alien* series). Like Hill, Giler had consumed them avidly as a kid, and now reread them with an eye toward their cinematic potential. He liked what he saw. "Walter came to me and said, 'I think we should buy these,' I said, 'I think so too,'" he recalls.

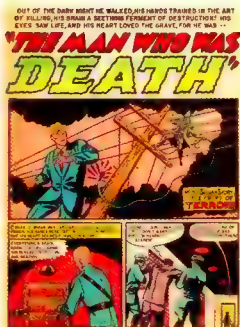


David Giler produced the 1974 thriller *The Parallax View*, directed by Alan J. Pakula and starring Warren Beatty.

Russ Cochran's hardcover EC reprints inspired Hill and Giler to bring *Tales from the Crypt* to the screen.



Hill had picked out "The Man Who Was Death" as his premiere segment long before *Tales from the Crypt* debuted on HBO.



Then There Were Three

In 1983, Hill and Giler were working with Joel Silver on *Streets of Fire* when Silver spied Hill's *Tales* reprints. Something clicked. "I told Walter that we should do an anthology feature film based on *Tales from the Crypt*," Silver recalls.

He was preaching to the choir—Hill already had his favorite all picked out. "I know exactly what segment I want to direct," he told Silver enthusiastically. "There's this one great story that I love called 'The Man Who Was Death' (*Crypt of Terror* #17). It's about a guy who's an executioner who thinks that people are real wimpy when they scream, 'I don't want to die!' Then he goes off on his own—sort of a do-it-yourself death squad—and starts killing people who've been 'getting away with murder.' When he gets caught he starts screaming, 'I don't want to die!'"

"I thought it sounded great," recalls Silver. "I called my attorney to see if we could acquire the rights. The three of us bought an option from Bill Gaines. It cost us very little." Gaines was willing to let the option go relatively inexpensively because he knew he was dealing with some of Hollywood's major players. "When we made our contact with Gaines," recalls Walter Hill, "it all went very smoothly because I think he associated us with high-class movie-making. Before this he'd always been dealing with people who just wanted to make horror movies."

One More Makes Four

"Nothing happened for more than a year," continues Hill. "Finally Joel called back and told me that Richard Donner was interested. He wanted to know if it was okay to bring him into the project, which was fine by me."

Donner began his career as an actor, but switched to directing with segments of the Steve McQueen television series *Wanted: Dead or Alive*. After directing a number of movies for television, he moved into the horror genre with the highly successful feature *The Omen* (1976).

Donner was a teenager—smack in the heart of Gaines' target audience—during the heyday of the original comic books. They went through a lot of Evereadies in his family—he was a charter member of the flashlight-under-the-blanket brigade. The ECs stuck in his mind into adulthood, and formed part of a deep respect for comic books that he carried into his work.

One of his most successful films was *Superman* (1978), a project he took on out of a sense of obligation to do right by an American icon, and a devotion to Truth, Justice, and the American Way—not to mention "white bread, apple pie, and ham sandwiches," he adds with a grin. "In all seriousness, though, I directed *Superman*



Richard Donner directed all three blockbuster Mel Gibson/Danny Glover *Lethal Weapon* films, which he coproduced with Joel Silver.

"I sometimes say that one of my first ambitions was to do comic books. Now I've achieved it."

—Walter Hill

because I felt that an American tradition was about to be destroyed. Russian producers who lived in Costa Rica were going to make the film in Italy—with an English director. They had no idea who *Superman* was—he was just a red cape to them. I stepped up and volunteered. After they offered me the opportunity, I rewrote the script—I changed everything. Sure it was exciting to do a big picture with Marlon Brando and Gene Hackman, but I really wanted to take it away from them because they had no idea what they were doing. It would have been a travesty. I was raised on *Superman*, and I really felt like I was salvaging a piece of American heritage.”

The Quintet Is Complete

The last person Joel Silver brought into the Crypt was Robert Zemeckis, who like Silver was too young to have been caught up in EC comics in childhood. “I came into Bill Gaines’ world through *MAD* magazine in the 1960s,” recalls Zemeckis. “I became a real fan while I was in film school at USC. That was where I met Bob Gale, my long-time writing partner. He was a comic book aficionado and a major EC buff, and he was the one who reintroduced me to them.”

A Chicago native, Zemeckis grabbed the attention of Steven Spielberg with his student film *Field of Honor*. In 1978 he directed his first feature film, *I Wanna Hold Your Hand*, the story of a group of teenagers who embark on an odyssey to go see the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. After writing 1941 (with Gale) for Spielberg and directing *Used Cars* (1980), he had his first megahit with *Romancing the Stone* in 1984, a success he immediately followed with *Back to the Future* the following year.

Zemeckis connected with Silver in 1988 when he convinced him to do a self-parody cameo—as a stereotypical screaming director—in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* “While we were filming, Joel mentioned that he was working on getting EC comics on cable, and I thought that was a smart way to do it. I knew *Tales from the Crypt* would never succeed on network television. They’d ruin it. If it was going on cable, I told him I was interested.”

With the addition of Zemeckis, the quintet was complete and Silver finally had enough firepower to pitch the idea to HBO. Things moved quickly from there. “I hadn’t heard much for about a year, then suddenly there was a phone call from Joel,” recalls Walter Hill with a smile, picking up the story. It was a classic staccato micro-conversation with Silver: “Joel got on the phone and said ‘Bob-Zemeckis-wants-to-do-one-and-Dick-Donner-will-do-one-and-HBO-is-interested-and-could-you-shoot-your-segment-in-five-days?’” When Hill said yes, Silver hung up, and a project which had been on the back burner since Ronald Reagan hit the ground running in his first term in office was suddenly red hot.

Donner was a charter member of the flashlight-under-the-blanket brigade. EC gave him a deep respect for comic books that he carried into his work.



Charles Donner agreed to direct *Superman* in order to see that Superman's on-screen persona matched his comic book heritage.



Robert Zemeckis' *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* a seamless mix of live action and animation sequences, was an homage both to cartoons and to film noir.

Donner made the trio of Silver, Gale, and Hill a quartet in 1986, when he was directing the first *Lethal Weapon* (since that time there have been two hit sequels.) “Joel and I were sitting the trailer, this little GMC motor home, during a break in late-night shooting and he said, ‘I got this project I want to do—*Tales from the Crypt*.’”

“Of course I still remembered it and I offered to help Joel pick up the option. I had no idea what our concept was going to be or how it would evolve, and there were times when everyone near and dear to my file said, ‘Don’t put any more of your money in this project,’ but I stuck with it.”

Joel Silver: The Spark Plug

A film devotee since childhood, Joel Silver attended NYU film school and broke into Hollywood as an assistant to producer Lawrence Gordon. Gordon already had a relationship with Silver's future **Tales** partner, director Walter Hill, having worked with him on **Hard Times** (1975, Hill's directorial debut). Silver's first project with Gordon was Hill's feature **The Driver** (1978). He was also associate producer on Hill's next film, **The Warriors** (1979). After working on the Burt Reynolds hits **The End** and **Hooper** (both 1978), he and Gordon produced the next three Hill features — **48HRS**, **Streets of Fire**, and **Brewster's Millions**.

In 1985, Silver established his own production company, Silver Pictures, and was responsible for some of the most commercially successful films of the 1980s and 1990s, including **Commando** (1985) and **Predator** (1987), starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, **Jumpin' Jack Flash**, with Whoopi Goldberg (1986), three **Lethal Weapons** featuring Mel Gibson and Danny Glover (1987, 1989, 1992), two **Die Hards** (1988, 1990), starring Bruce Willis, and **Executive Decision** (1996). The **Lethal Weapon** trilogy began his association with another fellow **Tales** executive producer, director Richard Donner.

Joel Silver was a toddler when Bill Gaines was standing up for his comics before Estes Kefauver and the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency. "The comics were already out of print when I was in my formative years, but sometimes you got lucky when you went to camp or slept over at somebody's house," recalls Silver. "Often the kid's older brother had some. You went through the collection and if you found one you'd pull it out and say, 'I gotta read this —' they were like some kind of forbidden fruit. Everyone knew they weren't ordinary comic books."

Once he got to Hollywood, he kept bumping into them, and one of the biggest bumps was Walter Hill's **Alien**. "I saw a rough cut of the film and was totally blown away by one particular scene," says Silver. "Something had planted eggs in the host; the eggs grew and an alien came bursting out of this guy's chest. It was so startling to me, and I remember taking about how much I liked it with Walter, who told me that the original idea came from an old comic book called **Tales from the Crypt**."

In 1982, horror virtuoso George Romero (**Night of the Living Dead**) filmed **Creepshow**, an homage to the old EC comics that was based on Stephen King's stories, not on the comics themselves. Between his boyhood recollections and later Hollywood contacts, Silver became aware that the EC stories were "out there." Then he saw Hill's reprints, and began putting the deal together that brought **Tales from the Crypt** to life.

Joel Silver made his directorial debut on **Tales from the Crypt**. His episode was entitled "Split Personality," and starred Joe Pesci as a con man who romances a brace of wealthy twins but deludes them into believing that he has a twin brother. Fred Dekker wrote the script, as he had for the premiere episode, "And All Through the House." Often described as the "consummate producer," Silver knew to surround himself with experienced personnel on his maiden voyage as a director. "I wanted the best people I could get, and I had the 'A' team with me," he says with a smile. "In addition to Dekker, David Lowery was my storyboard artist — he later did **Jurassic Park**. Jan De Bont was my cameraman, who went on to direct **Speed** and **Twister**." Silver's initial outing was well received, but he decided that he much preferred producing, and "Split Personality" remains his sole directing credit.



Joel Silver's "A Team" for his directorial debut on **Tales from the Crypt** included cinematographer Jan De Bont (above), who had served as director of photography for Silver on **Die Hard**, and Academy Award-winning actor Joe Pesci (right), who had appeared in Silver's **Lethal Weapon II** and **III**.



"Joel is a very entrepreneurial fellow," says Hill. "The fact that there is a show is really more because of his entrepreneurial efforts than any other factor."

"Joel Silver would have been one helluva running back in the NFL," laughs Richard Donner in concurrence. "Once Joel gets the ball, forget it. He just took this thing and ran with it."

Getting Gaines' Blessing

First, however, the partners had to convince Bill Gaines. "We had to go back and restructure the agreement," says Hill. "The original contract with Gaines was a feature deal, and he had to be persuaded that HBO was a good way to go."

The idea of an anthology feature film was a dead end on any number of grounds, almost all of which were financial. There had been a flurry of interest in making the movie at one studio, but they wanted to take it out of the hands of the originators and make it as a low-budget film, which was a deal-breaker. Worse yet, recent anthology films with a horror theme, including Stephen King's *Creepshow* and the ill-fated *Twilight Zone*, had not performed well at the box office. Whether or not there was any real similarity between *Creepshow* and *Twilight Zone* and *Tales from the Crypt*, studios were now gun-shy of making a horror anthology for theatrical release.

Gaines agreed that the *Tales* material was too strong for network TV. If a feature was not feasible, cable was his only real opportunity. Besides, cable offered one advantage that a feature film could never match—a chance that all the stories might eventually be filmed. He gave his okay.

The production company ordered multiple copies of Russ Cochran's EC reprints. Some segments follow the comics more closely than others, but the Gaines agreement stipulates that all episodes of *Tales* must originate from the stories that appeared in EC horror comics.

The *Tales* production company also bought the reprints of the EC's science fiction comics, and in the wake of the success of *Tales from the Crypt*, a new cable TV series based on *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* is in the works for 1997. Because *Weird Science* has already been used as the title of a feature film (oddly enough, it was one that Joel Silver produced), the new series will be called *Perversions of Science*.



Into Production

With Donner, Hill, and Zemeckis attached and committed to direct the first three episodes—the "trilogy" as it's known within the *Tales* production company—Silver found that selling the idea to HBO was pretty much a slam dunk. When the green light finally came, however, the timing, of course, was terrible. "Zemeckis had just released *Roger Rabbit*," remembers Silver. "He was about to start shooting *Back to the Future II* and *III* at the same time. He was going to be unavailable for about a year. He told me, 'If you want me to do this, I've got to do it right now.' This was roughly December of 1988. Donner and I didn't have any time either—we were in the midst of shooting *Lethal Weapon II*."



Four of the five *Tales from the Crypt* executive producers (from left, Richard Donner, Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis, and Walter Hill) pose with their newly exhumed host the Crypt Keeper. David Giler, the fifth member of the quintet, is shown above.

I was reincarnated in all my gruesome glory on slay-ble TV. My show introduced me to a new de-generation of fans, but many still dismembered me from my comic book days.



* On March 2, 1992 two child actors were killed in a tree accident during filming

Setting the Tone — The First Episodes

Despite the time crunch, all of the partners realized immediately that the first few episodes would be crucial because they would set the mood for the entire series, and they all participated in its creation. "The early seasons established a level of quality that set the benchmark for what was to follow," says Bob Zemeckis. For the series premiere, Zemeckis had selected "And All Through the House" (*Vault of Horror* #35) and wanted to do it with his wife, actress Mary Ellen Trainor, in the lead.

Throughout the preparation and the filming, he worked closely with Fred Dekker, who wrote the script, polishing it to make sure it was faithful to the original story. "I wanted to start fresh—I didn't want it to look like we were trying to remake the prior film (which had featured Joan Collins as the murderess.)

I went back to the comic book—there were lots of images that I wanted to evoke or replicate, including the final image with Santa Claus." (The homicidal St. Nick was played by Larry Drake, best known to TV audiences as *LA Law*'s simple soul Benny, the office boy.) The producers sent it off to Bill Gaines for his assessment. "Games gave me just one comment when he read the screenplay," laughs Zemeckis. "He said, 'My only note is that she's got to be screaming her head off at the end.' We took that to heart and in the last scene Mary Ellen gave us one of the greatest onscreen screams ever."

Walter Hill finally got his chance to film "The Man Who Was Death" early in 1989. "In addition to doing a movie about someone he calls "a twisted human being," he was anxious to try a technique he'd never been able to do in film. "I wanted the character to talk to the camera," he declares. "It's an old technique that I'd seen many times when I was a kid."

Casting a performer who could address the audience directly gave him some problems. "I kept reading actors and I didn't feel anybody really caught the flavor of it. I was in despair. Then Bill Sadler came in. He was great. I said, 'If you can do this exactly the way you did it just now, I'll give you the lead.'"

Sadler, a real *Tales from the Crypt* "friend of the house," starred in the first *Tales* feature *Demon Knight*, had a part in *Die Hard II* (produced by Joel Silver), and also played the lead in Hill's 1989 feature, *Trespass*, which was written by Bob Zemeckis and his writing partner Bob Gale.

Richard Donner, the only *Tales* producer with a TV background, wrapped the last scene in *Lethal Weapon II* late on a Wednesday night in March of 1989. He began shooting his initial *Tales* segment, "Dig That Cat...He's Real Gone," first thing Thursday morning. He intentionally shot the segment "like panels of a comic book. We did the entire show with extreme wide-angle lenses, deliberately distorting people."



Richard Donner frames a shot from his first episode, "Dig That Cat...He's Real Gone." Donner is the only *Tales* producer who had prior experience directing for television.



At William Gaines's suggestion, director Robert Zemeckis coaxed a bloodcurdling scream from Mary Ellen Trainor in the closing scene of "And All Through the House."



Walter Hill offered Bill Sadler the lead in "The Man Who Was Death" only if he vowed to perform it exactly as he had for the audition.

The funhouse mirror unorthodoxy of it was hard to deal with, at least at first. "I was working with a young editor, and after his first cut, I really thought I was going to have to replace him. Instead I said to him, 'I want you to go back into the editing room and do everything you were trained *not* to do. Think of all the bizarre things you thought but never said to all those old farts when you were learning—that nobody has any sense of style, initiative, inventiveness in cutting a film—and do that.' He came back two days later and showed me another cut. It was sensational and totally nonconformist, with a lot of jump cuts. It had a marvelous comic book sensibility and it was exactly what I wanted."

With their three inaugural segments, directors Hill, Zemeckis, and Donner set the mood and the standard for the rest of the episodes.

They also established the wide range of possibility for others to follow. "Bob was interested in things that go bump in the night," says *Tales* associate producer Alex Collett. "Walter has always had a little bit of a darker,

psychological edge, and Dick wanted to do something that had a wild, lighter tone. Taken together, they showed the directors who followed them that the work could be gritty and dark, a classic thriller, or wild and way-out-there, with comic overtones."

Once the boundaries had been established, keeping the rest of the series on track was a task that fell primarily to Joel Silver. "Joel is very hands-on," says Walter Hill. "The overall tone of the show has a lot to do with Joel's taste. He selected what shows got made. He decided who got which scripts." In that regard Silver functioned the way Gaines and Feldstein had in the days of the early comics—he matched the material to the creative talent.

"All producing is casting," says Silver firmly, "whether it's casting in front of the camera or behind it. You have to put the players together and make it work. We're always a bit frantic. Sometimes it's a miracle that these episodes come together as well as they do, but the reason they turn out so well is the genius of Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein. The stories are so perfect that they manage to live through whatever occurs, and they survive and succeed."



The *Tales* lead-in, with its camp, creepy Danny Elfman theme song and helter-skelter jaunt through a haunted house, has become almost as much of a trademark of the series as the Crypt Keeper himself. Silver and the other executive producers pushed for a top-notch opening sequence because they knew they'd have to live with it "forever."

Inviting the Audience into the Crypt

The partners understood that the opening sequence had to establish a "Cryptian" tone immediately. Like the splash pages of a comic book story, the lead-in to the series was designed to have a signature feel, one that would physically bring the viewer into the Crypt. This was accomplished through a point of view that approximates walking into a haunted house with a hand-held camera or VCR.

Actually, however, the haunted house is about the size of the 18th hole on a miniature golf course. The lilliputian Victorian mansion was created by Richard Edlund's effects studio, Boss Film. An alumnus of George Lucas's Industrial Light and Magic who began as

Americans have always felt more comfy with a host or guru to guide them through the chills of horror stories, a tradition that dates back to the days of crystal sets and Arch Oboler's *Lights Out*. At about the same time that Wertham's crusade was bearing down on Games, Feldstein, and the three GhoulFunnatics, a new late-night TV show premiered in Los Angeles.

The Horror Host

The program was nothing more than a collection of old horror movies—*The Million Dollar Movie* with a very limited library—but it was hosted by a curvaceous woman sporting three-inch black nails and a slinky black dress. In a good girl age of Peter Pan collars and poodle skirts, it fit her like an Ace bandage and emphasized her astonishing cleavage.

She called herself Vampira. According to Frank Sklar in *The Monster Show*, Maika Nurmi, the woman who portrayed her, claimed the Dragon Lady in *Terry and the Pirates*, the evil queen in Disney's *Snow White*, and silent film vamp Theda Bara as her inspirations. However, Vampira's closest "living" relative is almost undoubtedly Drusilla, the alluring female sidekick that Johnny Craig created for the Vault Keeper. Since that time, female vampire couture has not evolved significantly—both Lily Munster and Morticia Addams apparently used Drusilla's dressmaker. More camp than vamp, contemporary horror hostess Flyna (Cassandra Peterson) is also a direct descendant.

Vampira was followed by other TV movie horror emcees. The most successful was perhaps Roland in Philadelphia, the "Cool Ghoul" who presided over



Shock Theater. Eventually he moved up to a bigger market, New York, and worked under his own name, Zacherley.

When original horror and thriller programming appeared on television with *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Twilight Zone*, Hitchcock and writer Rod Serling were present to introduce each segment. Hitchcock in particular had a droll flair for presenting himself with a prop or costume that matched the theme of the episode. When *Tales from the Crypt* was coming on line at HBO, there was no question that the Crypt Keeper would host the program. The only question was what form he would take.

Because of movie commitments, Bob Zemeckis' first episode, "And All Through the House," was already in the can before the Crypt Keeper was developed. HBO liked what they saw, but "they were very concerned about a host," remembers Joel Silver. "In those days even Michael Eisner was hosting the Sunday night Disney series, the way Walt used to do it."

Silver reassured them that a Crypt Keeper was in development. With a commitment for six shows (up from the original three), the production company could afford to amortize the cost of the Keeper and come up with something really inventive.

**Look at me in the slimglight —
I'm the new Dead Sullivan,
bigger than Malice-ter Croak!**



"You know... you don't necessarily have to have a nose."

Robert Zemeckis

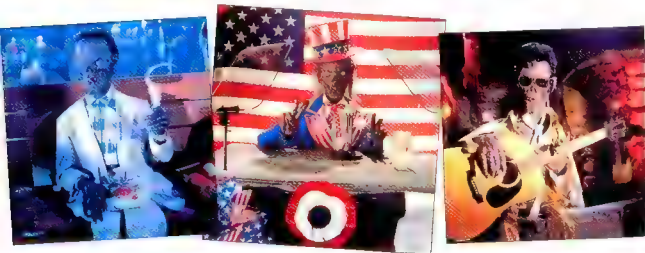
"Bob, Walter, Dick, and I, plus others involved in production, began having meetings about what he should look like," continues Silver. "We felt the Keeper was very important. To us the idea of a dead host was even more interesting than having a live one—most of them are dead anyway."

Animation's expert puppetmaster Kevin Yagher brought the Crypt Keeper to, er... life. Quite by chance, Yagher, who had created Chuckie, the evil doll in *Child's Play*, ran into Joel Silver while retrieving items from his storage facility in Glendale. Silver, who also had materials stashed there, was intrigued when he glimpsed Yagher's monster stuff in the open locker and eventually asked him to work on the Crypt Keeper.

Bob Zemeckis worked closely with Yagher to hone his persona even before work began on his physique. "We talked a lot about the

It's as if he's flipping everyone off from the grave." Which makes the Crypt Keeper, in a way, the Ultimate Slacker.

After meeting with Zemeckis, Yagher did some prototype sketches, then moved into clay mockups. What followed were a series of colorful discussions between Yagher and the executive producers about the physiognomy of the Crypt Keeper—discussions akin to demented sessions of Mr. Potatohead, with Yagher trying out various facial features on the basic design and producers trying to determine which were essential and which were superfluous. It was definitely a case of Less Is More—as the Crypt Keeper shed hair, lips, and teeth, his identity was crystallized and distilled. In his first incarnation, he sported a prominent hook nose. Like a plastic surgeon with a rhinoplasty patient, Yagher tried about half a dozen noses on the



After spending his first couple of seasons in a conservative cloak, the Crypt Keeper became more audacious in his choice of apparel, playing dress-up as *Forrest Gump* (left), Uncle Sam (center), and Elvis (right).

Crypt Keeper's personality traits before I started shaping him," says Yagher. "We built a whole back story for him, about why he's got that snide look and those piercing pale blue eyes. We talked about his breath smelling and the rotting pieces falling off him, which inspired me more than any visual you could ever have. I learned a lot about building a character in the process. The Crypt Keeper is likable, but he's also sly and treacherous—if you turned your back on him, he'd just plunge a knife into you."

"He'll make you laugh, but he may also kill you. He's this little asshole."

says Zemeckis with a grin. "But he's dead, so he doesn't care what anyone thinks of him; he can say anything he wants to. His attitude is, 'What are you gonna do—kill me?'"

Keeper. When Zemeckis suggested that perhaps a nose was extraneous, Yagher carved an indentation into the smooth surface of his clay model and found consensus almost instantly.

Walter Hill and David Giler, who *Alien* and *Thelma & Louise* had envisioned a host who was a bit more humanesque. Hill, in particular, thought he might be like British actor James Mason (barking back, perhaps, to Ralph Richardson's portrayal in the films of the '70s). Neither one was quite prepared for the final visage Yagher created. "We looked at it and said, 'Oh my God!'" laughs Giler. "But we were wrong. It made the show."

"Without the Crypt Keeper," says Richard Donner, "I don't think we would have had a series. We would have had a comic book anthology and no third act. The audience needed a personality to hook on to. He became the connection that made it

work. People tune in to see the Crypt Keeper as much as the stories. He became a trademark, a legend that everyone could relate to.

In addition to molding him physically, Yagher was also responsible for finding the voice of the Crypt Keeper: actor/stand-up comedian and *Star Search* winner John Kassir. Kassir was the voice of Meeko, the mischievous raccoon in Disney's *Pocahontas*, and is the voice of *everybody* on USA Network's new series *Johnny Time*, which Kassir developed and produced. Kassir drew upon a motley jumble of sources of inspiration—a handful of Alfred Hitchcock, a bit of Rod Serling, a little Henny Youngman here and a pinch of Margaret Hamilton there. (Margaret Hamilton portrayed the Wicked Witch of the West in the *The Wizard of Oz*.) In the end, however, he came up with something all his own to portray what he calls his "cackling bag of bones."

Yagher auditioned several actors, then brought Kassir's tape to Joel Silver with his endorsement. "What got my attention was John's high-pitched, wicked laugh," recalls Yagher. "He also had the raspy 'dead' voice that we were looking for." The gravelly aspect soon became a problem for Kassir—achieving that sandpaper effect was not sustainable for very long. John could only go so many minutes," says Yagher, "before he had to stop for lots of lemon and honey."

"I have so much fun doing him, but at first my vocal cords were like raw meat by the time we were done with a session," admits Kassir. "I had to lighten him up a little just to keep going." Kassir voices the Keeper not just for the TV series, but for all appearances connected with the *Tales from the Crypt* theatrical films, and for the kids' game show that takes place in the Crypt.

For the first two years, the Crypt Keeper appeared in his standard hooded garb—it was not until the third season that he

became more adventuresome in his attire. At the same time, his humor became cheekier and his personality blossomed. "He plays dress-up now," laughs Yagher. "We can put him in sunglasses, or a *Superman* outfit. He's been John Wayne, Bogart, and Brando—and even Howard Stern."

"The Crypt Keeper is a real character, not just a voice or a puppet," says Kassir fondly. "He's evolved, just as a character would in a sitcom. He has grown to enjoy death so much more each year."

The emergence of the Crypt Keeper as a star parallels a period of growth for Yagher himself. With the support and guidance of the *Tales* executive producers, Yagher began directing the "bumper" segments that open and close the show.

He also directed the playful *Tales* episode that chronicled the birth of the Crypt Keeper. Called "Lower Berth," it featured Yagher's brother Jeff, the only actor he knew who'd cheerfully sit still for five hours in Makeup every morning, which is how long it took to outfit him with a second face.

"This has been such a wonderful experience," says Yagher enthusiastically. "They say that when you have dreams of flying you're really enjoying what you're doing during the day—I'd go home from the *Tales from the Crypt* set and dream of flying every night. It's the most fulfilling thing I've ever done."

I'm surrounded by wooden performers... stiffs! My show needs some real hack-tors, genuine scars of the silver scream!

John Kassir, the voice of the Crypt Keeper, has helped his character expand his sense of humor and develop his true personality.



Bringing the Crypt Keeper to Life

It takes six puppeteers to bring the Crypt Keeper's outrageous impudence and his "up yours" demeanor to life. Kevin Yagher has assembled an experienced ensemble troupe, each of whom must operate in concert with their cohorts. They have to think alike and respond in unison.

Many of his puppeteers have been with the Crypt Keeper for a long time—since the days when he still had a nose. Seated behind and underneath the puppet, Van Snowden works the head and body, with his hand inside the cranium. Charles Lutkus, who originally worked in Yagher's shop and was part of the team that built the Keeper's head, sits behind Snowden and

manipulates the hands and arms. The Crypt Keeper has half arms that come off the Keeper's shoulder and attach to straps around Lutkus' hands, a technique that Jim Henson pioneered with the Muppets. If the legs are visible, another puppeteer works the lower body. The Crypt Keeper can move his ankles and curl his toes.

Four puppeteers work the Crypt Keeper's facial expressions. His head is actually very large and very heavy, because it is crammed with twenty-seven servo motors. Servos are small motors well known to hobbyists—little different from the Radio Shack specials that power model cars and airplanes.

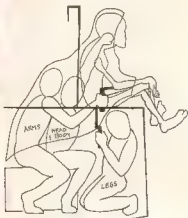
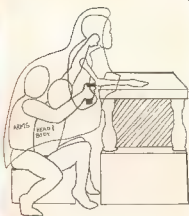
Erik Schaper is responsible for the sneer. Using four joysticks, he controls the cheek and nostril area in the middle of the face. Mecki Heussen operates the eyes and eyelids. There's one puppeteer (David Stinnett) responsible

just for the smile. He works the e's, b's, and t's—all the letters that cause the corners of your mouth to pull back, and of course for the Crypt Keeper's trademark laugh. Servo motors were not powerful enough to work the smile, which instead is operated manually off ten feet of cable.

"When Bob Zemeckis talked to me about creating the Crypt Keeper, he talked about character, about what a funny, weird little guy he is, how his breath smelled bad. That inspired me more than any visual clues," says Yagher. "Then I made a series of sketches, and finally I made a clay head—on which we tried about 30 different noses. Of course, we ended up with no nose."

A crew of eight people from Yagher's studio built the Crypt Keeper. Yagher sculpted the head himself, and worked closely with *Tales* producers to define his ghoulish features.





Brock Winkless is the virtuoso responsible for the jaw and mouth, working from a console connected to his own mandible.

As Winkless opens his mouth, the Keeper mimics his action. Winkless also manipulates four joysticks on the console to move the lips in sync with the dialogue. He controls four points of movement over each canine tooth, two upper and two lower. Brock is the best lip guy in town," boasts Yagher.



"We have a great time doing the Crypt Keeper live," says John Kassir. For TV, however, he lays down the audio track first. Puppeteers watch Kassir at the microphone and take some of their motion cues from him as he does his voiceover.



Because his foam latex skin rots (how appropriate) the Crypt Keeper gets an annual beauty makeover when the show is on hiatus.





The "In" Thing to Do

At one time or another, the executive producers had worked with most of the biggest names in both film and television, and their commitment to the series gave *Tales from the Crypt* a cachet in the industry that few other television opportunities could match. Although they had planned to call in some old markers and ask some well-known "friends" to appear, they quickly discovered that coaxing and cajoling were unnecessary—stars and directors were calling *them* and asking for a chance to do a segment. The result was a conga line of outstanding talent, both in front of the camera and behind it.

It became a mark of prestige to do a *Tales from the Crypt*. Among the television and movie luminaries who have appeared on the series are Harry Anderson, Francesca Annis, Bruce Boxleitner, Sonia Braga, Beau Bridges, Tim Curry, Timothy Dalton, Blythe Danner, Yvonne DeCarlo, Hector Elizondo, Marel Hemingway, Margot Kidder, John Lithgow, Elizabeth McGovern, Esai Morales, Cathy Moriarty, Lou Diamond Phillips, Michael J. Pollard, Priscilla Presley, Christopher Reeve, Natasha Richardson, Emma Samms, Martin Sheen, Brooke Shields, John Stamos, Richard Thomas, George Wendt, Adam West, Treat Williams, and Burt Young.



On *Tales from the Crypt*, stars such as Demi Moore, Beau Bridges, Timothy Dalton, Sherilyn Fenn, Isabella Rossellini, John Lithgow, Kelly Preston, William Hickey, and Sonia Braga got a chance to stretch themselves as actors and take on unexpected roles—without a lengthy commitment to a project.



The casting reflects a consciousness of the comic horror heritage of the series. Adam West played TV's Batman. DeCarlo portrayed Lily Munster on *The Munsters*. Curry was one of the anchors of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and Reeve and Kiddler (who appeared in separate episodes) played Clark Kent and Lois Lane in Donner's *Superman*. Much of the cast of

the offbeat gothic mystery TV series *Tales from the Crypt*, including Kaye, Mai Lachlan, Kimmy Robertson, Sherilyn Fenn, Joan Chen, and Gail Zaubers, have also appeared.

William Teitel guided *Tales from the Crypt* during its first two seasons before going on to produce the features *Jumanji* and *Mr. Holland's Opus*. (Gil Adler has been the series producer since that time.) "There was a huge interest in the creative community in working on the show," recalls Teitel. "We were casting *Dead Right* with Howard Deutch (*Pretty in Pink*) directing. We were looking for the perfect person, and it occurred to us that the role was tailor-made for Demi Moore. Joel knows Bruce and Demi quite well. He called her and she agreed to do it. I was stunned that she was going to do a television show, but I was even more stunned by how good it was. On the set there was a real sense that there was something very unusual and wonderful that was happening. Demi just nailed her character, and she was great to work with." Moore played a waitress who married a fat, unsightly man because a fortune teller predicted that he would inherit a fortune and then kick the bucket.

Among the most distinguished actors to work on *Tales from the Crypt* is dumped legend Kirk Douglas. When the possibility first presented itself, there were those who suggested that appearing on a cable TV show was

The Tales from the Crypt executive producers may have the biggest Rolodex in Hollywood. Stars appearing in various episodes include actors who have worked with one or more of the producers previously, those who have worked with the director of a particular episode, and those who are breaking a mold—indulging a desire to do something they've always wanted to do. From the top, among those who have joined in the fun are Christopher Reeve, Meat Loaf, Katey Sagal, Lee Arenberg, Emma Samms, Eileen Brennan, Teri Garr, Andrew McCarthy, Mariel Hemingway, Travis Tritt, Colleen Camp, Harry Anderson, Audra Lindley, M. Emmet Walsh, Yvonne DeCarlo, Carol Kane, Natasha Richardson, and Lainie Kazan.

"Kirk was amazing," says Zemeckis. "He was very serious about it. We had some intense story meetings before we started shooting. He broke down every word and every sentence, trying to make the script stronger. He wanted to know the reason for each line. He told me, 'This is where I'm really hurt, but on the day I walk on that set, it's not a day."

"Yellow," together with "Showdown," (directed by Richard Donner) and "King of the Road," starring an as-yet-unknown Brad Pitt, was originally supposed to be part of a 90-minute pilot for an action/adventure anthology series for Fox. Pitt's episode was directed by Tom Holland (*Child's Play*). Stephen King's *Thinner* and was the tale of a young James Dean-esque street racer who resorted to kidnapping in order to coerce his arch rival to face him one last time. The series would have been christened *Two Fisted Tales*, after Harvey Kurtzman's original comic book title, and would have featured Bill Sader, dressed in black and in a wheelchair, as the slightly off-kilter host. However, Zemeckis and the other partners balked at the censorship demands of the network and spun the three segments back into *Tales from the Crypt*.



"No episodes are alike," says Richard Donner. "Everyone brought their own style and we never said, 'It's wrong.'" Tobe Hooper shot Whoopi Goldberg in "Dead Wait" (right); Russell Mulcahy directed Edward Tudor Pole in



"Horror in the Night" (above right). Randa Haines directed "Judy, You're Not Yourself Today," starring Brian Kerwin (above left); William Friedkin did "On a Dead Man's Chest," with Gregg Allman and Yul Vazquez.

Isabella Rossellini evoked an image of her mother, Ingrid Bergman, in "You, Murderer," for Robert Zemeckis. In "Showdown," Richard Donner directed David Morse.

I Want to Direct

Name directors, like name actors, clamor for a chance to shoot a *Tales*, and for about the same reason—it's a chance to do something different in a relatively comfortable environment. Some, like Walter Hill, wanted to try a new technique, such as having a character directly address the camera. Others were film directors who had worked very little—if at all—in television. For all of them it was a refresher course in how to propel a narrative. "With *Tales from the Crypt*, what we're doing is making short films, which is what we all did in film school

when we first started out," says Bob Zemeckis. "It's a very difficult form to work in, but it's fun because it has to be very cinematic. You don't have a lot of time to set things up. You really have to move the story along in an economic, visual way. It's one of the few opportunities for directors to work in the short film form that isn't completely hamstrung and censor-ridden, the way broadcast television is. You don't have to worry about commercial breaks or censorship of any kind. You just have to do it with complete abandon and go for it."

Zemeckis took his own advice in "You, Murderer," which first aired in 1995. Zemeckis utilized the same CG (computer graphics) techniques that he used in his Oscar-winning *Forrest*

Gump to make Humphrey Bogart a character in the segment. "We took old clips and wrote dialogue that bracketed things Humphrey Bogart said in his films, and built shots around it. It was a lot of fun."

Randa Haines (*Children of a Lesser God*) took on "Judy, You're Not Yourself Today" in 1990. William Friedkin (*The French Connection*, *The Exorcist*) directed "On a Dead Man's Chest" in 1992. John Frankenheimer (*Birdman of Alcatraz*) directed Blythe Danner in "Maniac at Large" that same year.

Director Russell Mulcahy was working with Denzel Washington and John Lithgow on a theatrical release called *Raincoat* for Joel Silver and asked Silver for a chance to direct a *Tales* episode. "One of the philosophies behind the show was to really make the cinematography, the storytelling, and the acting have the same level of quality as a feature film. I was surprised, however, that there was no 'Bible' for the show—no overall guidelines to follow. Each episode is meant to have an individual look, so that every director has a chance to add his own stamp to the project."

As Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein knew all too well, some of the best outcomes happen as a result of breaking all the rules. Mulcahy, among others, found the opportunity exhilarating. "I asked the producers, 'How far can I go with these?' and they said, 'How far do you want to go?' That was all I got from the production side. I was given the freedom to go all out and have fun."



Stars Behind the Camera

There have been endless variations of the time-worn joke in Hollywood that everyone wants to direct—or, *has from the Crypt*, they can make it happen, and they can make it happen in an environment where it is safe to make mistakes, without endangering one's eight-figure budget or a "bankable" reputation.

Arnold Schwarzenegger made his directorial debut in the second season with "The Switch," the story of a beautiful young woman (Kelly Preston) hotly pursued by an old millionaire (William Batty's Honor Hickley) who would spare no expense to win her favor. "Arnold was gracious and undemanding," recalls Bill Teitler. "He always had a great sense of self-deprecating humor about him. He arrived without fanfare in the morning, but we always knew he was here—we could smell the rich aroma of his cigar smoke wafting up from the parking lot."

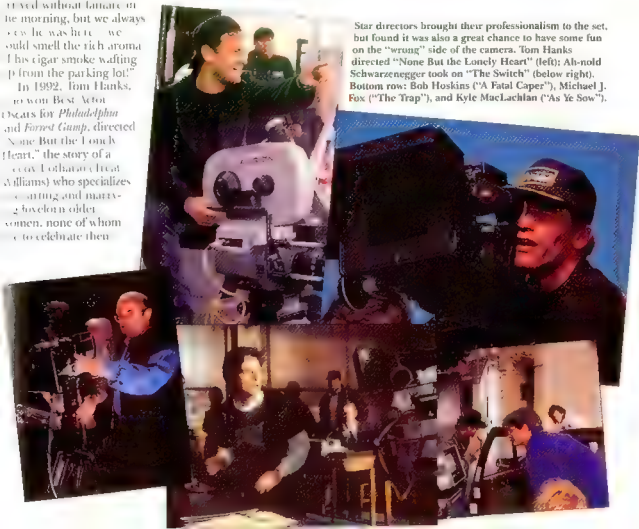
In 1992, Tom Hanks, who won Best Actor Oscars for *Philadelphia* and *Forrest Gump*, directed "None But the Lonely Heart," the story of a sexy Italian (Frank Williams) who specializes in seducing and marrying lonely older women, none of whom are able to celebrate their

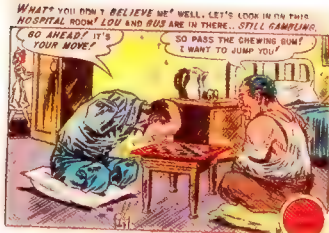
first anniversary. Michael J. Fox directed "The Trap" in a 1991 segment that started Teri Garr as an adulterous wife helping her husband to fake his own death in an insurance scam. *Love Bites* Kyle MacLachlan directed "As Ye Sow," the story of a man who hires a killer to bump off his wife's lover, in 1993. Bob Hoskins (Eddie Valiant in *Zerkow's Reger Rabbit*) directed "Fatal Caper" from the 1996 season.

The only *Long Ties* asked of its star directors was that they put in at least one scene in the segment, so that HBO could use their likenesses to promote the series.

"We gave them an opportunity to do something they've always wanted to do," says Joel Silver. "All they had to do was lend us their face."

Star directors brought their professionalism to the set, but found it was also a great chance to have some fun on the "wrong" side of the camera. Tom Hanks directed "None But the Lonely Heart" (left); Arnold Schwarzenegger took on "The Switch" (below right). Bottom row: Bob Hoskins ("A Fatal Caper"), Michael J. Fox ("The Trap"), and Kyle MacLachlan ("As Ye Sow").





Both Walter Hill, who directed "Cutting Cards" (above), and Joel Silver, who directed "Split Personality" (below), studied the comic book originals, and used them to plan out their shots.



The Link Between Comics and Movies

Any number of live action film and TV features based on comic books or cartoons have crashed and burned because they were unable to capture the feel of the pen-and-ink originals. The executive producers of *Tales from the Crypt* share a commitment to and a fondness for the EC comics that goes beyond their contractual obligation, and it's no coincidence that they have all been credited with having a comic book or cartoon sensibility in their films.

In the eyes of some critics, that's become more of an accusation than a compliment, but none of the five filmmakers sees a comic book outlook as a weakness. "I still look at comics and graphic novels a lot," admits Walter Hill unapologetically. "There is obviously a great carryover from these forms into what we do in motion pictures in terms of storytelling—the economy of visual means and verbal means—how you get it done in an efficient way and still bring mood and character into it."

Zemeckis, of course, happily pleaded guilty to having a cartoon sensibility and made the universally acclaimed *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* "The thing that's interesting about comic books, and especially about ECs, is that

they were ahead of their time in the '50s in terms of style," he says. "They were always extremely visual, with wonderful lighting and low angles. Naturally they were inspirational for a filmmaker. You could take an EC comic and it would trigger images in your mind. The way the panels and images were drawn were very much like movie storyboards."

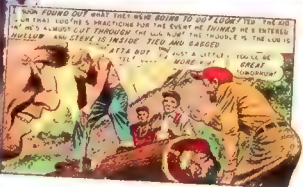
With *Tales from the Crypt*, the original intentions that Gaines and Feldstein had in mind were always clear," says Joel Silver. "The panels storyboarded each episode for us, and we tried to stay pure to those intentions."

This point of view gets a ringing endorsement from a highly reliable source—author/screenwriter and comic book aficionado Ray Bradbury, whose own works were adapted by Al Feldstein and Bill Gaines for EC horror and science fiction comics. "If you study comics for a lifetime," Bradbury declares, "those are storyboards for films. I knew it when I was ten years old. When it came time for me to write a screenplay, it was just like the comics." In 1956, he shared a screenwriting Oscar with cowriter director John Huston for *Moby Dick*, which starred Gregory Peck.

BUT NOVA HAD DIED MUCH EARLIER VIOLENTLY SHE LAY WITH BLOOD THAT HAD BEEN MISTAKEN FOR TEARS NOW DROD UPON HER CHEST. THE AT LAST A BUSTLE TUNG THE RIGID GUMMERE SECTIONS OF HER BODY HELD TOGETHER BY TINY RINGS SCREWED INTO THE JOINT BONES. COMPLETELY FINE, ALMOST INVISIBLE STRINGS WERE IN EACH MOVABLE SECTION TO THE CEILING BEAM OVER THE BED. THE MARIQUETTE PAGE WAS EMPTY THE JOURNAL NEWSPAPER WERE TORN FRAGMENTS UPON THE BEAM.



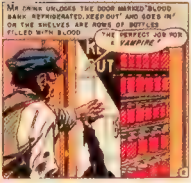
In "Strung Along," director Kevin Yagher chose a different camera angle to convey the scene first depicted by "Ghastly" Graham Ingels. This kind of artistic license was encouraged by the *lals* executive producers, as it had been by Gaines and Feldstein.



Director Russell Mulcahy modernized the finale of "Split Second," substituting a chain saw for Jack Kamen's axe, and making the scene a one-on-one confrontation between Ted and his boss.



In both "The Reluctant Vampire" (left), and "Carriion Death" (below), the comic book ancestry of the story is clear.





Tales from the Crypt is—not surprisingly—
a laboratory-cum-playground for
make-up artists, costumers, and creators
of special effects.

Gore Happens

As shown in his original sketch for "What's Cooking" (above), Todd Masters harnessed the resources of the special effects craft to realistically remove a loin steak from actor Meat Loaf.

In "Cutting Cards" (1990, directed by Walter Hill), a game of clippie poker takes a sinister turn, central to the plot. Somehow it's always a clock in the middle of a card game when you're going to get those shots. We're not a show on a schedule, so it's not as good as enough. Next day at the tables, of course, it's over there not going to get a very good picture of the scene.

Effects specialist Todd Masters has been associated with the series ever since his company was hired to create Voshurg's sculpted tomb and all the faces lurking in the background.

(He also created the demons for the first *Tales* feature, *Demon Knight*.) One of Masters' most challenging episodes was "Forever Ambergris," which first aired in October of 1993. "When Scott Rosenberg's script came in, it was very goooey," remembers Masters. "People were melting and their limbs were falling off, and at the end, Roger Daltrey (*Johnny's* pinball wizard and lead singer of The Who) has his nose flop into the sink. Steve Buscemi's character had this terrible Ebola-like disease called Jungle Rot. The script called for his face to start bloating and for ooze to be flowing, and for his eyeball to swell up and slide down his cheek like a slug. Rather than do it with a fake head, which would have been customary, we



"There's an absolutely horrifying shot in 'Cutting Cards' that I still hear about," says director Walter Hill, "in which a cleaver is used to cut off a guy's finger."

The sequence above shows how Hill shot this amputation scene.



The consensus within the *Tales* production company is that "Forever Ambergris" starring Steve Buscemi (right) is the grisliest episode to date.

Advancement in special effects techniques makes it possible to realize some effects that were not imaginable in the days of the EC comic books. Below, the cast from "Death of Some Salesman." From left: Tim Curry, Tim Curry, Ed Begley, Jr., and Tim Curry. The inset photo shows Curry in makeup for his role as the most unlovely daughter, Winona.



Todd Masters (center, with cap) mugs with his glee crew and some of their human spare parts.



did it right on Buscemi's face, with a prosthetic. As we did the effect, the entire crew just stood there with their jaws agape—and there was this weird pause as they watched." The next day producer Gil Adler called Masters into his office. With a cocky, rather triumphant grin on his face, he proclaimed, "I just got a call from Dick Donner. He says that we've crossed the line."

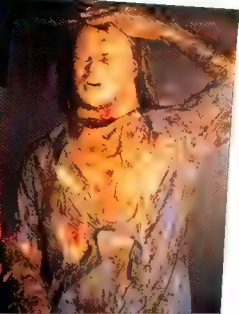
"That was the first time I realized that there actually *was* a line on *Tales from the Crypt*," declares Masters. "Other than that one instance, we've never really had anybody telling us what we could or could not do."

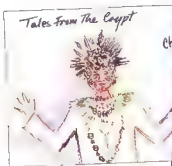
Masters is not alone in his appreciation for the artistic elbowroom afforded by *Tales*.

As any Hollywood veteran can testify, if you can gross out the crew, you've really got something.



With few limitations from management, *Tales* special effects teams have pushed the envelope to create riveting images such as these protruding shears from "Easel Kill Ya" (left), a bald ghoul and rising cadaver from "Mourning Mess" (lower left, center), and Travis Tritt's blood-drenched, agonized carcass in "Doctor of Horror."





Costumer Warden Neil has Cheech Marin dressed to kill in "Half Way Horrible."



from the Crypt. "My stuff is over the edge when I design for *Tales from the Crypt*, more so than anything else I do," says costumer Warden Neil, who has worked on more than half the episodes. "The producers and directors give me total freedom. They feed me the scenes and I just go from there."

Neil has to juggle a number of factors to maintain a properly "Cryptian" sense of sexy horror, problems that costumers on tamer shows don't have to grapple with—like toplessness. "We also have a lot of costumes that have to be rigged so that blood can fit into them and spurt out in a lifelike manner," says Neil. "It's got to look like real blood and the directors like it dripping in the right way. You can't have blood dripping out sideways."

Blood is director Russell Mulcahy's specialty. He's done a total of four episodes to date, and enjoys the Cryptian sense of gory fun. "Usually there is someone running around with a spritzer of fake blood," he chortles, "and I say, 'No! No! Bring the bucket!'" I run around with the bucket, throwing blood on the walls. The crew now wears protective clothing—those paper suits—when they work with me. I'm known as Russell 'Buckets of Blood' Mulcahy."

Tales from the Crypt was an instant critical and box office success.

The Ultimate Just Dessert

Since its debut, it has garnered a variety of industry honors in a wide range of categories—score, lighting, photography, editing, acting, and directing. Among the trophies are ten CableACE awards, including one for Best Dramatic Series (1990).

For Bill Gaines, the success of the HBO *Tales from the Crypt* series was his final victory over Fredric Wertham and Eses Ketauer, and the ultimate proof of the FC

"just desserts" theory that what goes around, comes around, and often in the way you'd least expect it.

"I always knew how near and dear to his heart *Tales* was," says Joel Silver. "I knew it was really very special to him, and I wanted to use his faith in me to honor the material, so I never let it get cheesy. We really tried to preserve the artistry of the material and to remain consistent with the original tone."

"Joel brought Bill Gaines to our studio in Culver City," recalls

Bill Leitler, "and it seemed to me that he was quite thunderstruck and very touched by what we were doing. He saw the care we were taking, and how much we respected the original material and the intention behind them. He saw that we hadn't taken the comics and made some thing else out of them. We really appreciated the comics for what they were, and we loved the same thing about them that he had loved—and still loved."

"He looked around, and I think on some level he saw all of us as another version of what he and Feldstein and the artists had been doing—putting this thing together and having a great time doing crazy stuff. I think he saw our passion and enthusiasm and it really brought it all back for him. There was this great sense of passing the torch—that we got it, we understood it, we loved it—and he got it that we got it. He died fairly soon thereafter."



With Bill Gaines' visit to the *Tales from the Crypt* set, the torch was passed to a new generation.

THE CRYPT COMPENDIUM

Since its premiere on Home Box Office in 1989, the reach of *Tales from the Crypt* has become truly global. The series is now broadcast on every continent except Antarctica. The Crypt Keeper hosts his fright nights from Bulgaria to Brazil, from Malaysia to Morocco, from Nicaragua to New Zealand.

Tales from the Crypt has now survived for more years as a television series than it lasted as a comic book. With the conclusion of the seventh season, there are now a total of 93 episodes of *Tales from the Crypt*,

all based on stories that originally appeared in the EC horror and suspense comic books of the early

1950s. EC patriarch Bill Gaines passed away

before the fourth season aired, but lived long

enough to appreciate that his work was in

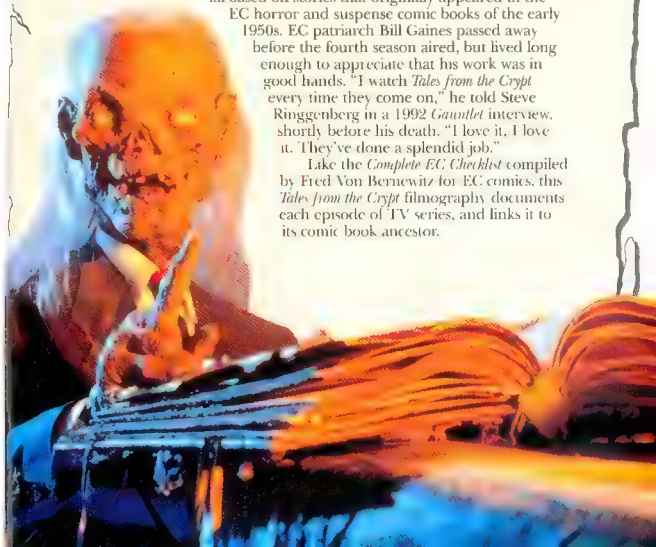
good hands. "I watch *Tales from the Crypt*

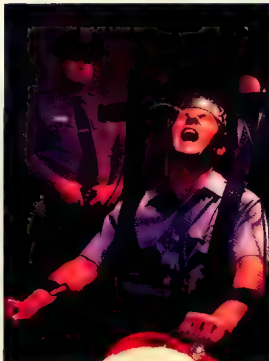
every time they come on," he told Steve

Ringgenberg in a 1992 *Gauntlet* interview,

shortly before his death. "I love it, I love it. They've done a splendid job."

Like the *Complete EC Checklist* compiled by Fred Von Bernwitz for EC comics, this *Tales from the Crypt* filmography documents each episode of TV series, and links it to its comic book ancestor.





Episode #2

The Man Who Was Death

Directed by: Walter Hill

Written by: Robert Renneff and Walter Hill

Originally published in *John's* (Nov. 17 '82)

Music composed by: Ry Cooder

Starring: Bill Sattler, David Wohl, J.W. Smith, Dani Minnick, Gerrit Graham, and Roy Brocksmuth

Sattler stars as Niles Talbot, a country boy who came to the big city as an electrician and ended up as state executioner. However, the death penalty is repealed, and he is suddenly out of a place. His friends to see murderers come to justice turn into a full-time hobby when he begins to stalk criminals who escape through cracks in the system and kills them in various "shocking" ways. He finds himself on the other end of the law and in the hot seat himself when police find him trailing and the death penalty is reinstated just in time to give him the hot seat in the house at his own election.

Episode #1

Dig That Cat...He's Real Gone

Directed by: Richard Donner

Written by: Terry Black

Originally published in *Howdy* (Nov. 21 '82)

Music composed by: Nicholas Pike

Starring: Joe Pantoliano, Robert Wahl, Kathleen York, and Gustav Vintas

Urie (Pantoliano) is given the chance of a lifetime when a scientist offers to implant a cat's gland inside of him, which will allow him to die and come back to life many times. The duo find Urie's talent in cash, with the help of a carnival Barker. With Urie subject him to all manner of his life's death—shoot him, hang him, drown him, and eight times he astonishes audiences by coming back to life. In a last desperate attempt to walk away rich, Urie tries to make the Barker let him alive. When he is resurrected in his mind, he will take all the Barker's money. Unfortunately, it is only after he is a few under the table, Urie realizes he has flunked math—the cat who died to give him his powers was a plain mathematician.



Episode #3

And All Through the House...

Directed by: Robert Zemeckis

Written by: Fred Dekker

Originally published in *Howdy* (Nov. 28 '82)

Music composed by: Alan Silvestri

Starring: Mary Ellen Trainor, Larry Drake, Marshall Bell, and Lindsey Whitney Barry

On Christmas Eve, a woman from a brutal murders her husband (Drake) in order to collect on an insurance policy. What she doesn't realize is that if it is an escaped murderer (Trainor) who is the one dressed as Santa Claus. When he tries to torment her with an axe, she becomes a victim of her own shoddiness, because she cannot call the police or the wife's right. This is not the figures out, plan to tell the cops that it is a psycho Santa who's after her hubby. It is a plan that works perfectly—until the daughter decides to let in the old St. Nick, who has an axe to grind with Mom.



Episode #10

'Til Death

Directed by Chris Walsh

Written by Jeri Barchilon

Originally published in *Twist of Fate* No. 28

Music composed by Nicholas Pike

Starring D.W. Moffett, Pamela Glen, and Aubrey Morris

A wealthy young plantation owner, Moffett, learns that the land he is about to build his estate on is nothing but a quicksand swamp and it is going to cost him a fortune to cover his losses. He devises a plan to woo a wealthy, if ghostly, woman for her fortune. But she won't have anything to do with him, so he seeks out the help of a voodoo priestess. She gives him a potion that will make her meet with one drop and with two make her his bride. At first the potion apparently has no effect on her, but then it kicks in with a vengeance. It seems the attraction is stronger if an ink is planned, for when she dies after some meddling by the priestess, she returns, roaring, in the arms of the dead to give him his suicide. But even that is not enough: the priestess resurrects him, too, for a reason of sorts.



Episode #11

Three's a Crowd

Directed by David Burton Morris

Written by Kim Kefauver and Anne Willette & David Burton Morris

Originally published in *Shock Suspense* No. 11-1

Music composed by Jan Hammer

Starring Gavan O'Herlihy, Ruth deSosa, and Paul Lieber

For their 10th anniversary, Richard O'Herlihy and Della deSosa decide to spend time working out their rocky marriage at the island estate of longtime friend Alan Luchner. It seems Richard has not only lost his job but cannot conceive a child with Della, which makes his stress level rise, and somehow in a drunken oblivion, Richard begins to believe his wife and friend are having an affair. He sees fit to find out right now, drunker than before, taking out Alan with a crossbow. When Della shows up, he tries to get his mind straight, but to deal with a pair of pints here. While taking her corpse out to the cabin to back her disposal, he discovers he's committed a terrible faux pas. A surprise is waiting for him in a party to celebrate the fact that Della had just found out she was pregnant with a second.



Episode #8

The Switch

Directed by Arnold Schwarzenegger

Written by Richard Tuggle and Michael Taas

Originally published in *Tales from the Crypt* No. 35-1

Music composed by Jay Ferguson

Starring William Hickey, Rick Rossovich, Kelly Preston, Roy Brocksmith, and Ian Abercrombie

An old millionaire (Hickey) wants badly to win over the heart of a beautiful young beauty (Preston) and so he takes the chance in place of a lot of money to win her heart, again. For a price, he changes faces with a handsome young man named Evans (Rossovich). But that's not enough for his wife and he eventually spends his entire fortune to exchange faces with the young man only to learn that all his true love ever wanted was money and security, which Evans, though old in appearance, now has, and consequently, he kills the girl.

Episode #12

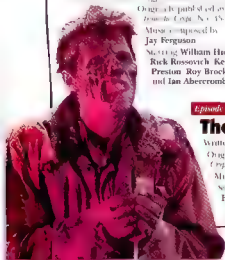
The Thing from the Grave

Written and directed by Fred Dekker
Originally published in *Tales from the Crypt* No. 22-1

Music composed by David Newman

Starring Miguel Ferrer, Teri Hatcher, and Kyle Secor

Movie: Mitch (Ferrer) turns green with envy when a sleek young photographer (Teri Hatcher) has his model girlfriend, Stacy (Hatcher) and she doesn't resist. To prove his avowed photographer gives Stacy a makeover, an old woman once told him would look any promise, never mind. Mitch talks the photographer and his Stacy, a model, planning a life. But Stacy's man uses from the grave just in time to prove that true love never dies—it just becomes zombies.





Episode #9

Cutting Cards

Directed by **Walter Hill**

Written by **Mae Woods** and **Walter Hill**

Originally published in *July* from *The City* page No. 52-3

Music composed by **James Horner**

Starring **Lance Henriksen**, **Kevin Tighe** and **Roy Brocksmith**

To gun it, card sharks face off in a small-town casino. They come to the stakes high—the loser hangs it out of town. It goes. The game Russian Roulette. Ultimately they go through all the gambles to discover that the gun was loaded with dummy bullets. So they deal it up the stakes to something a bit above a game of crap poker. No one no pot just lunch for high stakes in who wins each hand. The game ultimately leads the two of them in the hospital, unless, or still living as best of the best.



Episode #13

The Sacrifice

Directed by **Richard Greenberg**

Written by **Ross Thomas**

Originally published in *Shock Suspense* page No. 10-1

Music composed by **Jonathan Elias**

Starring **Kim Delaney**, **Kevin Kuler**, **Don Hood** and **Michael Ironside**

Hotshot insurance agent Reed (Kuler) decides to murder a well-to-do tycoon and marry his drop-dead wife Gloria (Delaney). The con scheme is a ploy to bump off her husband—purely by knocking him over his balcony. Al seems to be going well. Reed's boss (Ironside) shows up with pictures he has taken of the murder from his apartment across the way. It seems he and the new widow were once rather close. He wants her back. He makes a deal with Reed to share Gloria, but it's a vicious torture for her because Reed's boss constantly humiliates her. To free Gloria from this degradation, Reed decides to commit suicide and take all the blame for the murder. However, the last laugh is a Reed, because turns out that his boss and Gloria had been in cahoots all along.

Episode #7

Dead Right

Directed by **Howard Deutch**

Written by **Andy Wolk**

Originally published in *Shock Suspense* page No. 1-1

Music composed by **Jay Ferguson**

Starring **Demi Moore**, **Jeffrey Tambor**, **Natalia Nogulich** and **Troy Evans**

A hungry waitress (Moore) goes to see a fortune teller who predicts, but by the end of the day she will be dead, and then a new job. When the prophecy seems to be realized, the waitress comes back to him. The fortune teller foresees if she will meet a man who will make a fortune, then he sure enough she meets a man. When a grossly successful man for the sake of a promising future, she marries him. A condition of the deal she would be the one to get the money first, by being the millionth customer in an automatic game that she would die by her jealous husband's hand after she let's him to kiss off. Having inherited the multimillion, he dies in the electric chair for having strangled her to death.





Clarkson accidentally witnesses a neighbor (the man) murder his wife. The shock of the incident leaves her literally speechless and she winds up committed to a hospital. In her hospital she discovers that her doctor is the same man she witnessed commit the crime. The doctor keeps her sedated and tortures her mentally all the while keeping her husband in the dark about everything. When the woman finally starts to get through to her husband, the doc is forced to eliminate him. She finally regains her voice as well as the wit to retaliate ultimately leaving the evil doctor to die slowly after he accidentally pops something fatal instead of one of his stress pills.

Episode #21

Mute Witness to Murder

Directed by Jim Simpson
Written by Nancy Doynce
Originally published in *Crypt of Terror* No. 18-4
Music composed by
Jana Hammer
Starring Richard Thomas, Patricia Clarkson, Reed Birney, Kristine Nielsen and Rose Weaver

On the eve of her university, a woman

Episode #24

The Secret

Directed by Michael Riva
Written by Doug Ronning
Originally published in *Haunt of Fear* No. 21-5
Music composed by David Kitay
Starring Larry Drake, Grace Zabriskie, Mike Simmons, Georgann Johnson, Stella Hall and William Frankfather

Twelve-year old orphan Theodora is adopted by a strange couple, the Colberts, who lock him away in an attic winged hand. It is admittedly every boys dream that there is something weird going on. He never gets to go out and the Colberts are always out all day doing "work." To pass the time, Theodora strikes up a friendship with Larry Drake, the house servant. It turns out that the Colberts are actually foodstickers who plan on turning him into Theodora to use of their own. But little do they realize that Theodora harbors a secret of his own - he's twelve, all with an appetite for vampires.



Episode #22

Television Terror

Directed by Charles Picerni
Written by J. Randal Johnson and G. J. Pruss
Originally published in *Haunt of Fear* No. 17-2
Music composed by J. Peter Robinson
Starring Morton Downey, Jr., Dorothy Parker and Peter Van Norden

Sensationalistic sleazy TV tabloid host, Horton Rivers, Downey, Jr., tries for big ratings by airing live from within a supposedly haunted house, where an old woman hacked up a number of unsus-



pecting men. Some unusual poltergeist activity begins to scare the wits out of both Horton and his cameraman, but viewers are eating it up so he has no choice but to plunge farther into the howls of a cold, abode. When he suddenly discovers his cameraman has been murdered, Horton lands himself in jail at the mercy of a host of very unruly spectators. Of course, the ratings are through the roof, but Horton winds up being tossed out a window and falls to his death.

Episode #23

My Brother's Keeper

Directed by Peter S. Seaman
Written by Jeffrey Price and Peter S. Seaman
Originally published in *Shock Suspense* No. 16-1
Music composed by Michael Rubini
Starring Timothy Stack, Jonathan Stark, Jessica Harper, Ron Orbach, and Valerie Bickford

Kand Frank (Stack) and brother-in-law Eddie (Stark) are Siamese twins. Frank won't agree to an operation that would sever them because he fears being lonely, so Eddie decides to trick him by getting him to tell a sweet go named Marie (Harper). He hopes Frank will sign for the operation after she suddenly dumps him. When Marie realizes she actually does love Frank, Eddie murders her in a fit of rage. Frank can't tell her ops because they arrest and sentence Eddie to death. Frank goes too. After they are split up, however, Frank has the final laugh as the cops drag Eddie away.



Episode #34

Mournin' Mess

Written & Directed by Manny Coto

Originally published in *Info from the Crypt* No. 384

Music composed by Nicholas Pike

Starring Steve Weber, Rita Wilson, Ally Walker, Vincent Schiavelli, Nick Angotti, and Frank Kopyc

We see starts as a lachrymose reporter investigating a string of murders of street people who gets fired. He tries to follow the story. He gets a hot score, however, when he can even think of the kills. Schiavelli comes after the reporter and threatens his life. The newsstand doesn't help clear his name. When the murders and every night the kills are over, the reporter goes to his grave in a cemetery for the homeless, which is sponsored by a group called G.H.O.U.L.S. He discovers that the society is really not much. Beneath the graves lies a series of cat anatomy, which they use up and serve the deceased humans, and guess who's next on the menu.



Episode #32

Easel Kill Ya

Directed by John Harrison

Written by Larry Wilson

Originally published in *Info from the Crypt* No. 313

Music composed by J. Peter Robinson

Starring Tim Roth, Royce Megret, Nancy Fish, Debra Mooney, and William Atherton

Roth portrays Jack, an artist who finds his niche after he kills a neighbor and paints a version of the bloody aftermath. An executioner (Atherton) commissions him to paint more of the same, but Jack gives up art for the sake of the wife. When she is the victim of a hit, Jack runs and he decides to murder a man in the hospital parking lot and wrap up one more twist of work to pay for the operation that can save her life. As the only one who could perform it was the very man he murdered.

Episode #36

Deadline

Directed by Walter Hill

Written by Mae Woods and Walter Hill

Originally published in *Shock SuspenStories* No. 134

Music composed by Steve Barick

Starring Richard Jordan, Jon Polito, Richard Herd, John Capodice, Rutanya Alda, and Marg Helgenberger

After losing freedom of the press, Charlie Jordan hurls himself out of work and on the skids, he meets a knockout gal (Helgenberger) who puts the spring back in his step. He vows to go on the wagon and get back on track by writing about soap. Charlie successfully finds himself stuck in the middle of a hot story about a Greek diner, which he overhears a woman. But the owner has his gun fixed. When he gets the telephone number, he finds all the dirt he goes to call him. The woman awakes. She's not dead. More interesting, Charlie is stuck. Love is never over. It's the same girl he met in the bar. He's never come back, and Charlie's strange habit to death to make sure he's got something for the papers. However, the fact of the incident eventually drives him mad and drives him to a padded cell.

Episode #30

Dead Wait

Directed by Tobe Hooper

Written by A. L. Katz and Gil Adler

Originally published in *Info from the Crypt* No. 234

Music composed by David Mansfield

Starring Whoopi Goldberg, John Rhys-Davies, Vanity, and James Remar

A young criminal named Red Remar, looking for a juicy case, takes a pearl necklace from the island estate of ailing millionaire Dava (Rhys-Davies). Red shares with Dava's mistress Katrina (Vanity) to swap the pearl, but Dava ends up being dead. Red is alone when he swallows the pearl so he can get out. In the middle, Red shows him and they through his worst nightmare to receive it only to have Katrina turn on him and demand the pearl. Just in time, Dava's spiritual advisor, St. Pylgri (Goldberg) shows up to take care of Katrina and Red finds out the young priestess has far greater plans for him and his priceless red locks.





Episode #31 The Reluctant Vampire

Directed by **Elliot Silverstein**
Written by **Terry Black**
Originally published in *Issues of Horror*, No. 20
Music composed by **Chiff Eidelman**
Starring **Malcolm McDowell**, **Sandra Searles Dickinson**,
George Wendt, and **Michael Berryman**

A blood-sucking night watchman at a blood bank, McDowell finds he has to do little else to satisfy his appetite than sample from the bank's ample supply. He becomes smitten with pretty secretary Sally Dickinson, who is being preyed upon by the bank's sneaky owner (Wendt). When he owner declares that he's going to start firing employees, the vampire realizes it's time to start replenishing the supplies and satisfying his appetite the old-fashioned way. The bank owner discovers the vampire's secret and tries to blackmail him into making a fortune for his own personal gain, but his scheme backfires when the vampire knocks him out and takes him to a coffin.



Episode #32 Undertaking Palor

Directed by **Michael Thau**
Written by **Ron Finley**
Originally published in *Issues from the Crypt*, No. 89-1
Music composed by **Nicholas Pike**
Starring **John Glover**, **Graham Jarvis**, **Aron Eisenberg**,
Scott Fultz, **Jason Marsden**, and **Jonathan Quan**

A group of boys goes undercover to investigate a scam by an underhanded undertaker (Glover) and the town pharmacist who delivers poison prescriptions and charge a bundle. For the funeral after the unlucky victim's death. After one of the boys' dad dies at the hands of the doctor, the gang decides to get even. They put a switchblade in the undertaker's hand to murder his partner in crime. He is then horrified to learn that the boys have been videotaping his evil deeds. They give him a taste of his own medicine by plugging him into a machine that sucks out all his innards, turning him into one of his own high-priced corpses.

Episode #33 Split Second

Directed by **Russell Mulcahy**
Written by **Richard Christian Matheson**
Originally published in *A Shock Horror Stories*, No. 4
Music composed by **Brian May** and **Nicholas Pike**
Starring **Brian James**, **Michelle Johnson**, and
Billy Wirth

When underwear salesman Dixie (James) meets sexy, bored barmaid Liz (Johnson), he becomes a jealous husband—even though she's constantly teasing one boy. When Dixie's secret is let in the sack with young logger Ted (Wirth), he flies into a rage and kills him by whacking him with an ax. Liz gets help. Ted gets revenge by knocking out Dixie, placing him inside a hollow log, and letting the still-living saw blade finish him off. Dixie's son, however, survives his wild ride.



Episode #38 Yellow

Directed by **Robert Zemeckis**
Written by **Jim Thomas & John**
Thomas and **A.L. Katz & Gil Adler**
Originally published in *Shock*
Horror Stories, No. 2
Music composed by **Alan Silvestri**
Starring **Kirk Douglas**, **Eric Douglas**,
Lance Henriksen, and **Dan Aykroyd**

During WWII, a general's son realizes he no longer can perform on active duty. Deemed cowardly, his father offers him a way out—if he takes charge of one last mission, he will grant him a transfer. After he refuses to let his fellow soldiers open for a massacre, he flies back to base camp. Nobody believes that he did all he could, and his dad or has no choice but to sentence him to execution. Is he in a squad? But the flying squad's rifles are loaded with blanks—or are they?

Episode #37 Spoiled

Directed by **Andy Wolk**
Written by **Conner Johnson** and **Doug Ronning**
Originally published in *Issues of Horror*, No. 26-3
Music composed by **Craig Safan**
Starring **Faye Grant**, **Alan Rachins**, **Anita Morris**, **Tristan Rogers**, **Annabelle Gurwicz**, and **Anthony LaPaglia**

First, Grant is the romanticized wife of doctor Rachins, obsessed with his work. He actually lives every adventure she retreats to to wrap up. One day she misses a vital moment because the TV is on the Fritz. She signs a contract to immediately talk to Al Pacino. He finds out, however. When the doctor realizes they're having an affair, he makes death part of his experiment.





Episode #39

None But the Lonely Heart

Directed by Tom Hanks

Written by Donald Longtooth

Originally published in *True from the Crypt*, No. 33-34

Music composed by Jay Ferguson

Starring Trent Williams, Frances Sternhagen, Henry Gibson, Tom Hanks, and Sugar Ray Leonard

A seamy man (Williams) makes a killing by marrying wealthy old ladies and bumping them off. His "business partner" fears he'll get caught (he doesn't quite while he's ahead, but the lawless heart throb wants to try for one more rich widow, Sternhagen). After receiving a series of threatening notes, he knocks off those he suspects are aiding his partner (Hanks), who manages the cleaning service he uses to secret his victims, and has his revenge (Gibson). At last, he poisons the widow (Packer), he can flee, he is summoned to the cemetery, where he meets a gravedigger (Leonard) who says he's acting on behalf of the vengeful spirits of all the women he's done in over the years—and the greedy young man finishes it just how vengeful they always go close and personal.

Episode #41

What's Cookin'?

Directed by Gil Adler

Written by Gil Adler and A. L. Katz

Originally published in *House of Fear*, No. 12-14

Music composed by Nicholas Pike

Starring Christopher Reeve, Bess Armstrong, Art LaFleur, Meat Loaf, and Judd Nelson

Down on their back (Reeve) and (Armstrong) need business to pick up fast in the seafood cafe or their rubber-limbed Meat Loaf will eat them. The salad on their troubles comes when employer Gaston (Nelson) shows Fred a really delicious weak recipe with their landlord as the price cut. To Fred's surprise, customers start flocking (not all over to sample of the tender way beef and he has no choice but to make Gaston a partner). The cops claim they're getting closer to discovering the landlord's murderer, but the knife Gaston used to kill him was Fred's. When Gaston decides it's finally time to pull the rug out from Fred and Emma and make away with the profits, the last laugh is on him as he finds himself in a dish of his plate special.



Episode #40

This'll Kill Ya

Directed by Robert Longo

Written by A. L. Katz and Gil Adler

Originally published in *True Suspense*, No. 23

Music composed by Ira Newborn

Starring Sonia Braga, Dylan McDermott, and Cleavon Little

When scientists Sophie (Braga) and Pack (Little) discover that their latest serum contains toxins that will poison the bloodstream and kill anyone they administer it to, their boss, McDermott, tries to figure out the problem and deal with it. He's an insatiable beast, and he's not the only one who's a secret-seeker, seeing hope in between the sheets, so they're. He meets his counterpart in a secret lab, the two scientists accidentally meet him with the poison serum instead of his, and he begins himself with a couple hours left to live, and by accident, the two were setting him up and shows up at the lab, claiming he's there by injecting Pack with the serum, killing him instantly. When he drags the body of the cops and tries to tell his story, Sophie insists on to tell him it was all just a trick to get him to lighten up—and that the two had just discovered the cure after all.

Episode #44

The New Arrival

Directed by Peter Medak

Written by Ron Finley

Originally published in *House of Fear*, No. 1-3

Music composed by Michael Kamen

Starring David Warner, Joan Severance, Zeld Rubenstein, Twiggy Lawson, and Robert Patrick

Self-important radio chat psychologist Alan (Warner) wants to move to his new Severance, and the world that he really is the best. He accepts the challenge of paying a house call upon an order from another Robert (Patrick), and get into a problem that changed for his life. Alan is one of the members of his team, and finds his boss is often with striking ways. But he continues, unwanted, until he discovers a secret in his mind, and the reality is out of the zombie world a pendulum for murder.

Episode #41

On a Dead Man's Chest

Directed by William Friedkin

Written by Larry Wilson

Originally published in *Hunt of Fear*, No. 12-2

Music composed by Merl Saunders

Starring Yul Vazquez, Paul Hipp, Tia Carrere

Sherré Rose, Heavy D, and Gregg Allman

A rocker's ego conflicts with the band's bassist and his woman, a beauty named Scarlett (Carrere). His gregarious girlfriend (Rose) tells him to get a tattoo from a very special artist (Heavy D) who doesn't do requests but only translates what the skin tells him to design. To the rocker's horror, he finds his chest emblazoned with Scarlett's face. He does all he can to remove it, but it just keeps reappearing, and it finally drives him to murder. In a feverish fit of rage, he strangles Scarlett in a bathroom. But the tattoo continues to reappear. He ultimately goes mad, cutting it right out of his skin so that he might finally get the girl of his murder off his chest.



Episode #42

Seance

Directed by Gary Fleder

Written by Harry Anderson

Originally published in *Hunt of Horror*, No. 25-1

Music composed by Jimmy Webb

Starring Cathy Moriarty, Ben Cross, Ellen

Crawford, and John Vernon

A couple of bungling schemers (Moriarty, Cross) decide to pull one last last trick on an unsuspecting man named Chalmers Vernon. The plan is for Cross's character to take pictures while she and Chalmers get cozy, then show them to his wife. But their plot backfires when they find they can't convince Chalmers his wife will be destroyed when she sees the photos. As luck would have it, Chalmers accidentally falls to his death down an elevator shaft. The devilish duo soon discovers the reason Mrs. Chalmers never would have seen the photos: she's blind. When the couple decides she's going to consult with her spiritual advisor, the couple devises a plot. She will pretend to be the medium, and he will show up as the dead spirit. Chalmers and tell the woman to give them all her money. However, Chalmers himself really does return and gives the two what they deserve.





Episode #45

Beauty Rest

Directed by Stephen Hopkins

Written by Donald Longtooth

Originally published in *Issue of Horror* No. 353

Music composed by Alan Silvestri

Starring Mimi Rogers, Jennifer Rubin, Kathy Ireland, and Buck Henry

Rogers portrays a jealous model who goes berserk when her roommate (Ireland) lands a part she'd thought was hers for a while. She's not going to sleep around to get parts—but she is willing to murder for them. She forces the young lass to overdose on medication and quickly steps in to take her place as a contestant in a beauty pageant. She comes in second due to the meddling of a jealous competitor (Rubin), and murders her, too. With nobody left to stand in her way, she's crowned the winner. It proves a dubious honor. The tale turns out to be *Mis Autopsies* 1992—and the spokesmodel has to be among the deceased to accept it.

Episode #48

Maniac at Large

Directed by John Frankenheimer

Written by Mae Woods

Originally published in *Crime Suspense* No. 27-1

Music composed by Bill Conti

Starring Blythe Danner, Salome Jens, Clarence Williams III, Obba Babatundé, and Adam Ant

A messy new thripsy trick. Danner finds herself going nuts over a serial killer in the crowd. The many possible suspects include the thripsy's psychotic security guard, Williams III, the scary head thripsy (Jens), and a spooky pastor. Ant, who is very preoccupied with criminology. When the boss makes her stay life, she's scared that the serial killer is going to turn her into his next victim. At first, it's not clear that she herself is really the killer, and that's the young miss who makes her boss the next couple.



Episode #51

Werewolf Concerto

Directed by Steve Perry

Written by Rita Mae Brown and Scott Nimerfro

Originally published in *Issue of Horror* No. 46-1

Music composed by Rick Marotta

Starring Timothy Dalton, Dennis Farina, Walter Gotell, Charles Fleischer, Reginald VelJohnson, Lela Rochon, and Beverly D'Angelo

A sexual murder at a backwoods resort hotel is suspected to be the work of a werewolf. The hotel manager (Farina) has reserved it. In among them walks a werewolf expert who will get to the bottom of the case and deal with the beast. Meanwhile, since Lela (Dalton) is the head of both the mystery guest as well as a gorgeous, elusive woman (D'Angelo). Everyone is suspicious of one another, but the general consensus is that Lela is the werewolf hunter. However, when he moon grows full, he shows his true fur and goes out on the prowl for romance—only to discover the woman of his fancy is not only the werewolf hunter, but a vampire to boot.



Episode #50

Strung Along

Directed by Kevin Yagher

Written by Yale Udoff and Kevin Yagher

Originally published in *Issue of Horror* No. 35-4

Music composed by Jay Ferguson

Starring Donald O'Connor, Patricia Charbonneau, and Zach Galligan

O'Connor plays an aging puppeteer who dresses as his favorite wife (Charbonneau). His only solace is his favorite marionette, Koko, who seems to know his every cynical, nasty thought. When his wife and her lover (Galligan) make him think he has caused Koko to murder her, it induces a heart attack in him that leaves the two to continue their passionate affair. But Koko has a mind of his own and enacts a bloody revenge—with no strings attached.



Episode #52



Curiosity Killed

Directed by Elliot Silverstein

Written by Stanley Ralph Ross

Originally published in *Issue of the Crypt* No. 44-2

Music composed by Walter Werzowa

Starring Margot Kidder, Kevin McCarthy, J. A. Preston, and Madge Sinclair

Alfred (McCarthy) can no longer stand the nagging boss of his wife, Kidder, who keeps telling him she's pregnant—and a wife.

She can't keep a youth going secret, so she tells him. He thinks the fetus is a simplex (a real formula). So does the fetus's father, who suddenly has a voracious appetite.

Episode #54

As Ye Sow

Directed by **Kyle MacLachlan**

Written by **Ron Finley**

Originally published in *Shark Stories*, No. 141

Music composed by **Branford Marsalis**

Starring **Hector Elizondo, Patsy Kensit, John Shea, Sam Waterston, Adam West, and Miguel Ferrer**

MacLachlan directs this tattle tale about a husband (Elizondo) who hires a detective (Waterston) to spy on his love's trisul wife (Kensit). The husband suspects a snubbed dating prize. Shea, of foxing around with her a cop, is an investigator \$100,000 to have him taken care of. After he realizes he's been sickened, he slips into the confession booth to do the job himself. Suddenly, his wife comes in. The husband is less than a second's cheating and dead to have sexual relations because her mother died in childbirth. Upon starting the good news, the husband happily reunites with his wife, only to be shot down by a very human he hired.

Episode #57

People Who Live in Brass Hearses

Directed by **Russell Mulcahy**

Written by **Scott Nimerfro**

Originally published in *Island of Horror*, No. 272

Music composed by **Brad Fiedel**

Starring **Bill Paxton, Lainie Kazan, Brad Dourif, and Michael Lerner**

Two-bit criminal Billy (Paxton) plots to break into the site of the ice cream warehouse where he once worked. In revenge, he plans to frame the man who put him away (Dourif). Billy uses his half-wit mother (Kazan) as the front man, but complications ensue. There's no money in the warehouse sale. Billy must have taken it home with him. When he is, who not very just in on Billy, they comb him off guard, and Billy blows him away. But he does he realize that Billy has a brother too. A Siamese twin, attached to his back, who serves a vengeance upon Billy and Billy's wife.

Episode #58

Two for the Show

Directed by **Kevin Hooks**

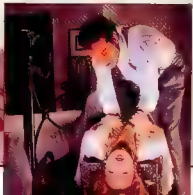
Written by **A.L. Katz and Gal Adler**

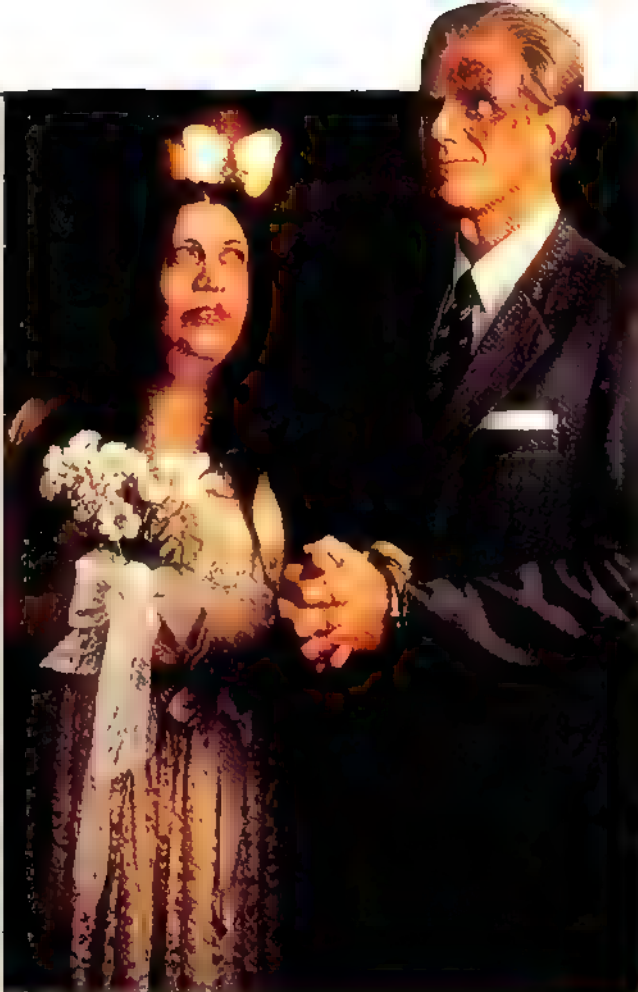
Originally published in *Four Seasons*, No. 71

Music composed by **Nicholas Pike**

Starring **David Paymer, Vincent Spanio, and Traci Lords**

When a husband (Paymer) believes his wife (Lords) is having an affair, he murders her. A cop (Spanio) shows up to investigate, but finds nothing except a very nervous man who won't let him near the bathtub where her body is floating. He chops her up, tosses her in a stranger's trunk, and he is sent out of town to dispose of the body. The cop follows him, so he switches his trunk for a similar one. When he opens the trunk to prove to the cop that he's not a killer, he gets a most unpleasant and inexplicable surprise—the trunk he saw also contains a corpse.





Episode #53

Forever Ambergris

Directed by Gary Fleder

Written by Scott Rosenberg

Originally published in *Tales from the Crypt* No. 41

Music composed by Jay Ferguson

Starring Roger Daltrey, Steve Buscemi, and Lysette Anthony

Seasoned combat photographer Dalton (Daltrey) finds himself second banana to up-and-comer Ike Biscani. He's also become close with the young man's sexy wife (Anthony). While on assignment in South America, Dalton sends Ike into a germ-warfare plague area. When he returns, he becomes stricken overnight with a fatal disease that eats him from the inside out. Dalton then takes Ike's work and returns to the States to claim it as his own. He tries to claim his sexy widow as well, but she's one step ahead of him. Her dying hubby sent her a letter detailing how he was set up by Dalton. She sacrifices herself by smoking some poison weed Ike sent her from the germinated village and then injects Dalton during intercourse.



Episode #53

Death of Some Salesman

Directed by Gil Adler

Written by A. L. Katz and Gil Adler

Originally published in *House of Fear* No. 13-1

Music composed by Michael Kamen

Starring Tim Curry, Ed Begley, Jr., and Yvonne DeCarlo

In a down-right grotesque triple play, Curry portrays Ma Pined beyond-horribly daughter Winona. A seamy, fast-talking traveling salesman (Begley, Jr.) who makes a killing selling false cosmetics plots to knock her at the door without realizing that the family has a thug against salesmen. To save his hide, he agrees to wed the repulsive Winona. When he learns of a fortune buried in the cellar, he escapes. The basement wife Winona disposes of Pa and Ma, who disapprove of the marriage. After she shows him where the treasure is buried, the salesman shoots Winona and gets to work digging, only to unearth an unsavory discovery—the family really isn't dead and the hole he just dug is his own burial plot.



Episode #56

Food for Thought

Directed by Rodman Flender

Written by Larry Wilson

Originally published in *Tales from the Crypt* No. 40

Music composed by Sylvester Levay

Starring Ernie Hudson, Joan Chen

John Laughlin, Phil Fondacaro

Kathryn Howell and Margaret Howell

Circus psychic Zambini (Hudson) dominates his lovely assistant Corinne (Chen) by invading her eyes a delight. When he discovers she has eyes for the Big Top hot center clown (Laughlin) and that she plans to run off with him, he torches the poor man to a crisp. Corinne flees in disgust. Days pass and she doesn't return, so he tries his powers of telepathy to call her home. However, Zambini's mind control instead coaxes the circus's marvealing gothic out of her cage and she tears the psychic limb from limb.

Episode #63

Oil's Well That Ends Well

Directed by Paul Absead

Written by Scott Nimerfro

Originally published in *Journal of Horror*, No. 342

Music composed by Frank Becker

Starring Lou Diamond Phillips, Priscilla Presley, Noble Willingham, Alan Ruck, John Kassir, Steve Kahan, and Rory Calhoun

Two scheming lovers, Phillips and Presley, devise a plot to pull a fast one on some good ol' Southern boys by convincing them that there's oil buried beneath a cemetery. All they have to do is buy the land and let it's thugs to drill. When the men figure out they're being taken for a ride, the two lovers already have that back covered. She takes killing him to make it seem like she's on the level, planning to bury him and dig him up later so they can run away with their earnings. When she turns up his lover, she finds it's one of the men instead—the guys are all in cahoots to pull a fast one on her. They're all shocked, however, when they discover the cemetery really is under the graveyard, but she drops a cigarette in it and blows them all sky high in a self-sacrificing last attempt to save her



Episode #61

Creep Course

Written and directed by Jeffrey Boam

Originally published in *Journal of Horror*, No. 254

Music composed by Jay Ferguson

Starring Jeffrey Jones, Anthony Michael Hall, and Nina Siemaszko

A blackish young student, Siemaszko, reluctantly agrees to assist the class jock, Hall, so that he won't think history, despite the intentions of the strict professor (Jones). She finds that extracurricular activities are getting deadlier after her professor and the jock took her in a basin cut built to become an offering for a very angry mummy. But she proves to be smarter in the subject of ancient history than either teacher or student, and charms the bandaged ghoul in the guise of his eternal love, Princess Nena. Meanwhile, the professor poses as the jock so that the mummy's wishes will be fulfilled. But when he goes to check on his late work documents, the young woman finds the remains of him by making the ancient one jealous over those memories, angry

Episode #65

Till Death Do We Part



Written and directed by Peter Dink

Originally published in *Journal of Horror*, No. 123

Music composed by Alan Silvestri

Starring Kate Vernon, John Stamos, Robert Picardo, Frank Stallone, Johnny Williams, and Eileen Brennan

Stamos stars as a gargoyle who's been "bought" by an aging old woman (Brennan) with a flock of goats by her side at every treatment. After she discovers her man is cheating on her with a pretty young thing, Vernon, she orders him to pull the trigger on the last one in the woods under her watchful eye. Instead, he blows away her henchmen and then comes after her. It's new love by his side in a bloody shootout inside a seedy bar. The hapless young man is threatened to find out the young woman has turned on him—so he perceives. In actuality, he's been fantasizing about what might happen if he sets her go, so he really does go through with the deed and blows her head off.



Episode #60

Well-Cooked Hams

Directed by Elliot Silverstein

Written by Andrew Kevin Walker

Originally published in *Journal of Horror*, No. 254

Music composed by Walter Werzowa

Starring Martin Sheen, Billy Zane, and Maryam D'Abo

Dennis Knight's *Late* is a trick magnet to which lures others for his incoherence, even going so far as to let his prey's assistant (D'Abo). When he comes across a true magical person, Sheen, he decides to bring off the old man and seal his fates. In trying to do one of the most tricks, however, he takes himself a stick pig after some tampering by his ex assistant. As the would-be magician goes to his last breath, the old man makes them right in front of him to prove that art and trickery are all in the eyes of the beholder, or is in the dead.

House of Horror

Written and directed by **Bob Gale**

Originally published in *House of Fear*, No. 15-2

Music composed by **Alan Silvestri**

Starring **Keith Coogan, Michael DeLuise, Courtney Gains, Brian Krause, Jason London, Meredith Salinger, Wil Wheaton, and Kevin Dillon**

Pledge night turns into hell night when mean-spirited frat president Wilton (Dillon) decides to scare three young pledges out of the fraternity by sending them on a journey through a supposedly haunted mansion. Along for the ride is a sexy young coed (Salinger) with eyes on one of the pledges (Wheaton) and the hope that her sorority can form a bond with the frat. When the pitfalls Wilton has set up inside the house prove to be nothing compared to a possible real-life phantom who may be stalking them, everyone turns on Wilton, and it's his turn to see who's the true ghostly going up into the attic. There, he is met with a ghastly surprise — the sorority sisters turn out to be a horde of vampire vixens, handy with the buzzsaw and hungry for some fresh meat.



Episode #64

Half Way Horrible

Written and directed by **Greg Widen**

Originally published in *House of Horror*, No. 26-3

Music composed by **Donald Markowitz**

Starring **Clancy Brown, Martin Kove, Costas Mandylor, Charles Martin Smith, Jon Tennay, Brian Wimmer, and Cheech Marin**

Morbid doctor Roger Lassen (Brown) buries a friend alive in the South American jungle to complete the development of a chemical preservative, then is plagued by guilt over the murder. The preservative will make him a fortune, but he can't seem to get it past FDA regulations. Visions of his dead buddy force him to admit having done it, despite only having his buddy's zombie corpse show up to get revenge. Lassen kills his friend once again this time, benefiting him. When a mysterious voodoo priest (Marin) shows up at Lassen's house to offer him the chance to exorcise his murderous "evil side" for good, he readily accepts. But fluids the operation leaves him only half the man he used to be.

Episode #62

Came the Dawn

Directed by **Uli Edel**

Written by **Ron Finley**

Originally published in *Shock Suspense Stories*, No. 9-2

Music composed by **Christopher Franke**

Starring **Brooke Shields, Perry King, Michael J. Pollard, and Valerie Wildman**



Lonely Roger (King) is driving along a mountain road to his cabin when he spies a young woman (Shields) stranded on the side of the road. After he helps her up to his place, he learns that there's been a fire nearby. The killer, who vows revenge, is on the loose in the area. The young woman schemes to tie Roger up and escape, but his estranged wife shows up and threatens everything. When she desperately searches for a way out, she makes a disturbing discovery — the female who she heard isn't Roger's wife, but Roger's nurse, and it is Roger's rather rare female side who turns out to be the killer.



Episode #72

The Pit

No. 1007, in 1 of 2 vols. by John Harrison.

[illegible]

Manuscript received: Kevin Gilbert

Starting Mark Ducascos Debbie Dunning Marjean Holden Stoney Jackson and Wayne Newton

[illegible]

Episode #69

Operation Friendship

Recently, Roland Mesa

Wright et al. / Ruth Ross 101

$$s_k = s_{k-1} + \frac{1}{k} \text{ and } \lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} s_k = 1$$

Mass composed by Peter Bernstein

Starring: Iain Donovan, Michelle René Thomas
John Caponera and Peter Dobson

Mild invertebrate compounds, such as Neosartorius, are used in a young fish hatchery and polychaete worms are used in the Drosophila. When Edgar has a young Neosartorius, he goes to the open water of the aquarium and takes a small fish to the young Neosartorius. Edgar says, "I have to find out what the fish is doing. I have to find out what the fish is doing."

[illegible]

Episode #74

Staired in Horror

Directed by Stephen Hopkins

WILLIAM COLMAN deKAY and Teller

(b) $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n f_k(x)$ exists μ -almost everywhere in X , if μ is σ -finite.

$$H \rightarrow \gamma \gamma \quad N = 2-1$$

Music composed by Jay Ferguson
STARRING: D. B. Sweeney Rachel
Tigotini and R. Lee Ermye

[illegible]

Épisode #60

Let the Punishment Fit the Crime

Director, G. Russell Mulcahy

Written by Ron Finley

originals published, \dots , α , α_0 , if $H(\alpha) = \infty$. \square

Music composed by Vladimir Horowitz.

Macrae, Catherine O'Hara, Peter MacNaol, and Joseph Maher

Macbeth—his castle of Glamis. O'Hara gets that straight, but when she sees her hero trapped in a sword-slitting contest, Bull's head is held for a single, too-long, flicker of light on the actress' face and she is startled to find that the sword is cutting through her neck. But a moment later, and she is in the main street and now a punishment.

She is repeatedly hit, falling, getting up, smothered and finally hit, the sword coming off as a single whine. She is finally delivered to a surgeon, perhaps severed. She doesn't collapse, she remains serene. Macbeth looks at her calmly. He says, "Kiss me."

His next sentence, "I'll take you," treats himself to the easy, the calm, while she must stand and take her agony.

100



Episode #73

The Assassin

Directed by Martin von Haselberg

Written by Scott Nimerfro

Originally published in *Black Vampire Stories*, No. 17-18

Music composed by Frank Becker

Starring Shelley Hack, Chelsea Field, Jonathan Banks, Marshall Teague, and Corey Feldman with Bill Sadler as The Grim Reaper

Suburban housewife Jones Hack finds her home invaded by a ghoul that goes as far as leading to the lethal toxin. Field's wife believes she is going to murder from her ex-husband's husband. Given it's a horror story, the husband's wife is the one to murder the husband in the basement, but she seduces and then kills him, proceeding to take out the other guy as well. Given that she has the top of a jacket, but the house wife has a little surprise for her



Episode #71

The Bribe

Directed by Ramon Menendez

Written by Scott Nimerfro

Originally published in *Black Vampire Stories*, No. 7-8

Music composed by Pray for Rain

Starring Terry O'Quinn, Kimberly Williams, Benicio Del Toro, Hal Williams, Max Grodenchik, and Esai Morales

Recently appointed fire marshal Zoeller (O'Quinn) is closing down the Nether Express, a popular club, to get back to his dairy owner. Puck (Morales) and his son (Del Toro) are closing his daughter's Williams dance place. He gives an answer to his son's wife. Only after burning, corpses are being taken out of the remains does he discover that his daughter had been inside, parting with Puck and his friends.



Episode #75

In the Groove

Directed by Vincent Spano

Written by Jack Temechan and

Colman McKay

Originally published in *Crim*

Vampire Stories, No. 21-2

Music composed by Greg De Belles

Starring Miguel Ferrer, Linda Doucett, and Wendie Malick

Frustrated talk radio DJ Gary Cruise (Ferrer) is half owner of a talking radio station and his sister Malick (the station manager) has given him a new partner, a sexy, sassy, married Val (Doucett) who quickly reveals to him as the hottest thing talking DJ around. But when the subject of mothers comes up, he goes bonkers on the air. As a result, his sister fires him. At Val's suggestion, he decides to murder his sister, but he's not sure he's waiting for him with 13. Puck Gary when part of a plot by the two ladies to replace him with Val.



Episode #70

Revenge Is the Nuts

Directed by Jonas McCord

Written by Shel Willens

Originally published in *The Vault of Horror*, No. 20-4

Music composed by Ulrich Sinn

Starring Anthony Zerbe, Teri Polo, John Savage, Bibi Besch, and Isaac Hayes

Patients at a run-down home for the blind suffer under the cruel hands of its owner, Dr. Prentiss Sheila Polo. A new inmate who becomes an outcast when the owner says he will fight on against the others if she agrees to sleep with him. Also a terrible prisoner in the home is Benny Savage, a blind inmate who saves Sheila and helps the rest of the blind inmates to look up the heartless owner.



Episode #68

Whirlpool

Directed by Mick Garris

Written by A. L. Katz and Gil Adler

Originally published in *Vault of Horror*, No. 32-1

Music composed by Nicholas Pike

Starring Rita Rudner and Richard Lewis

Comedian Rudner stars as a *files from the Crypt* story artist who becomes trapped in a twisted repetition hell, reliving the same events over and over again. First she goes to the office where her no-nonsense boss Lewis tears her latest story idea to shreds and fires her. Then she goes down to a bar and gets drunk, only to return late at night to ask for her job back and end up losing her bus. In the second recut over and over in a bad case of déjà vu.

Episode #67

Only Skin Deep

Directed by William Malone

Written by Dick Beebe

Originally published in *Files from the Crypt*, No. 38-2

Music composed by Nicholas Pike

Starring Peter Onorati, Sherrie Rose, Stephen Liska, and Diane Delascio

An excited young man Onorati meets up with a strange sexy woman Rose at a masquerade party. They go back to her place to make love, promising to return tomorrow. Next morning he wakes her up and she becomes enraged. She goes back to the bar, tells him to go to the room where she wakes up. Struggling around her apartment he finds a glass case, housing the preserved faces of her previous conquests. In a fit of rage, he tries to remove her mask, only to find that it's not a mask at all but her horribly disfigured face. She then murders him and adds one more face to her collection.



Episode #81

A Fatal Caper

Directed by **Bob Hoskins**

Written by Colman deKay, and A. L. Katz & Gil Adler

Uniquely pin stores in I to $f(x)$ in the I refd. No. 20.9

Musica composed by Jay Ferguson

Starring Leslie Phillips, Bob Hoskins, Natasha Richardson

Greg Wise and James Saxon

[illegible]

Episode #84

Escape

Directed by Peter

MacDonald

Written by
Gil Adler

[illegible]
$$0 \rightarrow \tau_{\leq -1} H^1(\mathcal{M}) \rightarrow H^1(\mathcal{M}) \rightarrow H^1(\mathcal{M})_{\text{free}} \rightarrow 0$$
Music composed by
Nicholas Pike

STAFF: Martin Kemp, Nickolas Grace, Nick Redding, and Roy Dotrice



An English WWII sailor Kemp is confined in a prison camp. One of his mates, named J, shows up, with a sister and a fiancée. What, how, covers he will reveal, the Englishman must survive. He kills the would-be rapist, refuses to share a spittoon, then becomes one of the prisoners in tow. However he is the savior of an elaborate setup for a backhouseness takes any to be a result of the execution of a woman's wishes. (R)

Episode #83

A Slight Case of Murder

Written and directed by Brian Helgeland

Originaly p. 21 is text in Latin of Bernard

1. 1. 1. 1.

Mason & Carpenter vs. Chris Boardman

Starring Francesca Annis, Chris Cazenove

Elizabeth Spriggs and Patrick Barlow



Episode #82

Last Respects

Directed by Freddie Francis

Written by Scott Nimerfro

(3) usually is a dashed *n*-face from the ℓ via $N_{\ell}(\mathcal{F})$.

Museo e museo La Frank Becker

Starline Emma Samms, Kerry Fox, Julie Cox, Michael Densson, and Dulcie Gray

Three suits is that the way to live a way. And that for me, when I was young, was the way to live a monkey's paw. Dollars, 200,000, which I had for my pennies. Millions. Later, the biggest Secret Marys Cook, like it's the only thing I have for my pennies was \$750,000. I thought, "Somebody goes with Marys, or makes sure it gets not so easy. But that's the way to live, and there is no money. One way to live. Marys and I could get into a crash that kills Marys. Dollars, the way to live, not so easy. As she was before the accident. The only one is that Marys is still alive. She was first drowned, a favorite to collect the insurance. The way goes, and with Marys, whose suit is a quarter. The way to live, not so easy. The way to live, not so easy."

Shari and Annis were the most modern in their attitudes. Shari had a double-strapped corset. As Mrs. Trask, her new neighbor, Sprague Wain, said, Mrs. Trask's new corset "careens" shows it; she must not lose her out-of-date "waisting in a corset." Yet, for example, she knoox neckties and buttons in the collar. When she has been dressed upstairs the night nurse sends her Missus's new towel hanging. She says, "As this towel hangs, it makes me think of getting in a towel, not of being in." Shari and Annis drive and obedient enough to the same. As they trust in the new collar, with its "poos and its bumping in and out" all an aid to the delight of the new night nurse who has "played the setup" as being a research for her next look.

Cold War

Directed by **Andy Morahan**
 Written by **Scott Nimerfro**
 Originally published in *Tales from the Crypt* No. 132
 Music composed by **J. Peter Robinson**
 Starring **John Salthouse, Jane Horrocks, Ewan McGregor, Colin Salmon, and Wilkie Ross**

After she binges yet another job, Cammy Horrocks decides she's had enough of the "foolproof" plans of her lover-in-crime Ford (McGregor), and walks out on him. At a bar, she meets a handsome black man named Jimmy, whom she lures into bed in order to enrage Ford. He threatens and humiliates Jimmy for being a mere human. Ford and Cammy, if that's out, are zombies. They try to kill Jimmy, but he's got a little something up his sleeve by way of retribution. He's a vampire. After a scuffle, all three fall out a window. Jimmy turns into a bat and flies away while the lovers plummet to the sidewalk. They live to see another day, albeit with mangled bodies. At least they've still got each other.



Smoke Wrings

Directed by **Mandie Fletcher**
 Written by **Lisa Sandoval**
 Originally published in *Vault of Horror*, No. 433
 Music composed by **Jay Uhler**
 Starring **Ute Lemper, Chris Stanton, Tres Hanley, Daniel Craig, Gayle Hunnicutt, Denis Lawson, and Paul Freeman**

When self-important ad exec Jacqueline Lemper hires Barry (Craig), she's delighted to find he's got her rival, Frank (Lawson), running scared. But Barry knows nothing about advertising and is really working for Alastair Touchstone (Freeman), the agency's founder who was ousted years ago. He gives Barry a device to use that gives new meaning to the term "subliminal advertising." When Barry's cigarette ad campaign is a smash, Jacqueline gives him Frank's position, but Alastair has a few nasty surprises for everyone.



The Kidnapper

Directed by **James Spencer**
 Written by **John Harrison and Scott Nimerfro**
 Originally published in *Shock SuspenStories*, No. 193
 Music composed by **Jay Ferguson**
 Starring **Steve Coogan, Julia Sawalha, Tim Stern, and Serena Gordon**

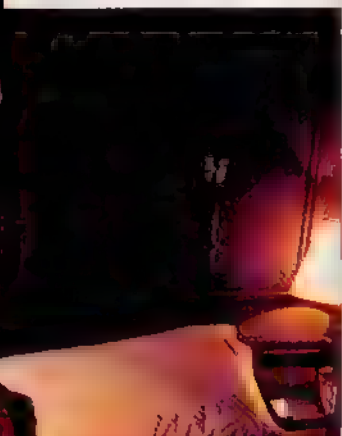
Pawn broker Danny Skeggs (Coogan) takes in pregnant single mother Teresa Sawalha so that she will not have to hook a fancy bedroom to have her child. All seems well until Danny becomes jealous of Teresa spending too much time with the newborn. He makes arrangements to have it stolen, but she's even worse without the little tyke around. He tries to buy the kid back from the crooks he hired to steal the baby in the first place. But a deal's a deal and the black marketeer threatens to sic his lean henchman on Danny. Desperate, he attempts to steal another woman's baby, only to be caught and beaten to death by the henchman just after realizing the infant he tried to pilfer was Teresa's.



Horror in the Night

Directed by **Russell Mulcahy**
 Written by **John Harrison**
 Originally published in *Vault of Horror*, No. 123
 Music composed by **J. Peter Robinson**
 Starring **Elizabeth McGovern, James Wilby, Roman Vibert, Edward Tudor Pole, and Peter Guinness**

During a jewelry heist, Nick (Wilby) decides to double-cross his partner, then holes up in a hotel where he requests that he not be disturbed. Of course, his conscience apparently hasn't heard, for he begins to have a series of horrifying visions that may or may not be accelerated by figments of his imagination. They center around a sexy mysterious woman. McGovern, he finds, is the hotel boy who won't get out of his head. He finally learns that she's an old flame he screwed over who has returned to haunt him and make life generally difficult in the near future. Nick and his supposed dead partner burst in and blow the hapless thief away.





Episode #90

About Face

Directed by Tom Sanders
Written by Larry Wilson

Originally published in *Haunt of Fear*, No. 27
Music composed by Vladimir Horowitz
Starring Anthony Andrews, Imelda Staunton, Anna Friel, Paddy Navin, Finty Williams, Emma Bird, Pip Toren, and Lane Vidal

When Jonathan Andrews discovers that he has two long-lost daughters named Angela and Leah (Friel), he decides to accept them as his own, much to the chagrin of his current girlfriend, Sarah (Staunton). Angela, however, won't let Jonathan see Leah, for fear that her ugly sister will cause Jonathan to have a change of heart about taking them in. Sarah, on the other hand, spends some time with Leah and finds her repulsive. When Jonathan plots to leave Sarah and the ugly of the society behind, Leah decides to strike back at her other Jonathan is forced to kill Leah and only afterward does he realize that he's murdered Angela as well as her sister. **Suspense** **Thriller**



Episode #91

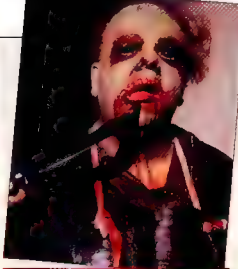
Ear Today...Gone Tomorrow

Directed by Christopher Hart
Written by Ed Tapia

Originally published in *Tales from the Crypt*, No. 211

Music composed by Jay Ferguson
Starring Robert Lindsay, Phil Davis, Richard Johnson, Gretchen Palmer, and David Gant

Makolm (Johnson) discovers that Glynn Lindsay, the expert safecracker he hired to pull off a heist, doesn't have the same heart as he once had. He prepares to kill him, but Makolm's beautiful wife, Kate (Palmer), suggests that he be given another chance. While Makolm is away, Kate suggests Glynn see a specialist who can repair his hearing, then the two can break into Makolm's safe and run away together. When such rescuee complications arise, Glynn gets an ear, from Kate and Makolm.



Episode #88

Report from the Grave

Written and directed by William Malone

Originally published in *Tales of Horror*, No. 153

Music composed by Frank Becker

Starring James Fram, Stobhan Flynn, Jonathan Firth, Gordon Peters, Julian Kerridge, and Roger Ashton-Griffiths

Elliot Fram believes he's on the verge of a fantastic discovery—the ability to harness thoughts from the dead through the use of a machine of his own design. He wishes to make an infamous murderer named Tyrnak Ashton-Griffiths his test subject and takes the lovely Annabelle as an assistant. But complications ensue and Annabelle is killed, leaving him in a state of morbid guilt. He discovers that he can bring her back through his machine. But Tyrnak comes too! Elliot solves this ethical dilemma in the worst possible way.



Episode #92

Confession

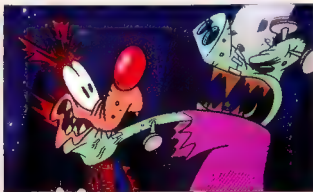
Directed by Peter Hewitt
Written by Scott Nimerfro

Originally published in *Shock Suspense Stories*, No. 42

Music composed by Julian Nott

Starring Eddie Izzard, Guran Hands, Ashley Artus, Alun Armstrong, John Benfield, and Mark Spalding

A serial killer is decapitating women all over the city, and Jack Hands, an interrogation expert, pinpoints a prime suspect—a screenwriter named Warhol Evans (Izzard). Warhol looks like a classic psychopath, but other reads roll before the story ends.



Episode #93

The Third Pig

Directed by Bill Kopp & Pat Ventura

Written by Bill Kopp

Music composed by Nathan Wang

Voices Bobcat Goldthwait, Cam Clarke, Brad Garrett, Jim Cummings, Charlie Adler, Jess Harnell, and Cory Borton

In this cartoon reworking of the tale of the Three Little Pigs, the two stodgy, ignorant pigs are called on the smart third pig, Dudley, is charged with their murders because the courts are populated solely by wolves. But the ghosts of his deceased brethren come to him and tell him to build a zombie Frankingpig to avenge their deaths and he does. The monster destroys the Wolf, but Dudley discovers he has a few other swinish problems.

NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE

With the 1995 film *Demon Knight*, the Crypt Keeper made the transition from the little silver box to the big silver screen. Directed by Ernest Dickerson (*Juice*), and produced by the same fearsome fivesome responsible for the TV series (Richard Donner, David Giler, Walter Hill, Joel Silver, and Robert Zemeckis), the film is a morality play of unabashedly Biblical proportions, bracketed by an Intro and an Epilogue from horror's Alistair Cooke, the Crypt Keeper.

They rolled out the dead carpet for the Crypt Keeper at the *Demon Knight* Hollywood premiere.



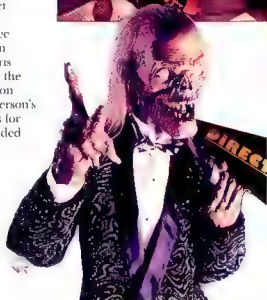
As the host, the Crypt Keeper materializes à la vintage Cecil B. DeMille, sporting a riding crop, a beret, and a megaphone. As he directs a scene from his own horror flick, he is mightily displeased with the scenery-chewing of the actor who plays Carl—or what's left of him. With a bone-shattering "Cut!" he tells off "Carl" (John Larroquette in an unbilled cameo), saying he's no Gorey Cooper or Robert Deadford, then settles his audience in for the beginning of *Demon Knight*.

HBO's *Tales from the Crypt* wasn't even on the air when the *Demon Knight* screenplay was first developed. The story began as a late-night skit session among three pals, all former NYU Film School students. Ethan Reiff, Cyrus Vorns, and Mark Bishop collaborated on a first draft 1987—and hung in there through a raft of changes and near-misses until the film was finally shot in 1994.

Director Tom Holland thought it might make a suitable follow-up to *Child's Play* (whose evil doll, Chucky, was created by Keepermeister Kevin Yagher). In an interview with Anthony C. Ferrara in *Fangoria* magazine, screenwriter Cyrus Vorns indicated that Holland was convinced the movie would succeed or fail on the strength of its villain, who at that time was called the Salesman. Holland was hoping to make the film with Chris Sarandon as the Salesman/Collector and Tommy Lee Jones as Braker, but went on to make *Fatal Beauty*, a bomb starring Whoopi Goldberg as a narcotics cop. The next director to show an interest was Mary Lambert (*Pet Sematary*, Madonna's music videos *Material Girl*, *Like a Virgin*, *Like a Prayer*), but she ultimately chose to make *Pet Sematary II* instead. When that movie failed at the box office, financial backing for her realization of *Demon Knight* evaporated.

"This is when we thought this script was cursed," screenwriter Ethan Reiff told Ferrara. "The joke was, the curse wasn't on us, but whoever optioned the script usually had serious career problems afterwards if they didn't make the movie. When the project cycled up with the *Tales from the Crypt* production company, it got the attention of Ernest Dickerson, who like other younger Crypt fans had been a *Famous Monsters* devotee in his youth. Dickerson worked with Reiff, Vorns and Bishop to bull up the script. Before settling on Zane and Sadler, Dickerson's short list of candidates for the leading roles included Willem Dafoe as the Collector and Val Kilmer as Braker.

John Larroquette has an unbilled cameo as a vengeful corpse in the Crypt Keeper's movie-within-a-movie.



**Frights!
Camera!
Hack-tion!**

The Big Scream!

There is a serious tradition to the horror movie genre, as Ernest Dickerson, director of *Demon Knight*, understands. "The way the demons are born definitely suggests [Ray] Harryhausen. There is

an image that sticks in your head forever and becomes a part of your psyche when the skeletons are formed from the Hydra's teeth in *Jason and the Argonauts*," he observed to Anthony C. Ferrante in a special *Tales* magazine produced by the editors of *Fangoria*. Prior to rising in the ranks of Hollywood directors with the gritty

contemporary drama *Juice*, Dickerson worked as a cinematographer on many notable films, including *Malcolm X*, *Jungle Fever*, and *Do the Right Thing*.

To capture the true EC flavor, Dickerson would not settle for any Alfred Hitchcock subtleties, but as his reference to Ray Harryhausen, one of the pioneers of Hollywood special effects, suggests, Dickerson was looking for more than just shock. "We thought that if the eyes are the window to

the soul, why not also let the soul escape [when you kill the demons]? So I didn't want to make it as easy as just shooting out the eyes. It's sort of like in *Alien*—when you kill the aliens, you have to make sure you don't get hit by any of that blood."

It was difficult to avoid being splashed with blood on the set of *Demon Knight*. Todd Masters supplied gallons of the stuff, and there would have been more, if Dickerson, Adler, and Katz hadn't modified the original script. "The demon attacks got fairly repetitive," Dickerson told Ferrante. "It was a lot like *Alien* in that it was a constant raging war and gun battle, and one of the things I wanted to do was play up the attacks and have them become more psychological. And I think we beefed up the characters and made them stronger, and also worked with the mythology

"There are a lot of classic, mythic themes at play in this movie," observes Dickerson.

"The mythology is really something that everybody had access to, and it's a twist on the ideas we've been presented with all along. The film basically takes the tack that the stories in the Bible are essentially information that has been passed down through word of mouth for hundreds of years before anybody wrote it down. So basically, you start to question how much of the information is real—and the movie speculates that the Bible has part of the story, and there's another part that isn't told to us. We find out later, through our characters, what's really going on."

Director Ernest Dickerson, right, grew up as a *Famous Monsters* and H. P. Lovecraft fan, and over the years developed a *Jeopardy*-class encyclopedic knowledge of horror, gore, monster, and vintage gothic fright films.

With *Demon Knight*, the personality of the Crypt Keeper as a ghoul-about-town flowered. Theatre audiences also glimpsed a rare sight—the Crypt Keeper walks! As in the comic books and in the TV show, his bad puns and humorous asides reminded the audience that it was "just a movie."



Tales from the Script



The story turns on one of the classic plot conventions of the horror genre—a motley bunch of misfits, thrown together by chance and confined to a single location, who must make it through the night, even though they are besieged by the Forces of Evil.

Those forces are led by a suave character known as The Collector, played by Billy Zane (*Dead Calm*, *The Phantom*). The Collector is a gatherer both of souls and of antiques. His archrival, a mysterious careworn paladin named Brayker (William Sadler of *Die Hard II* and Walter Hill's first HBO episode, "The Man Who Was Death"), has something he very desperately wants to complete his collection—an ancient mystical amulet. The talisman is a key filled with a dark liquid, the only one of seven originals remaining in safe hands on the terrestrial side of the River Styx. His Satanic Majesty's forces hold the others, and Brayker's key is all that stands between the human race and an Armageddon in which all the smart money would be on the really baaaad dudes in black from across the river.

A Mystical Omen

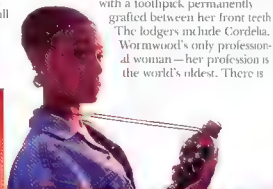
It's a dark and stormy night as the two adversaries clash on the outskirts of Wormwood, New Mexico. Outskirts are all Wormwood really has—it's a town quite literally in the middle of nowhere. Their

arrival comes with a bang (as it were) as a pedal to the metal car chase ends in a fiery crash that destroys both vehicles. Now on foot with the Collector still in pursuit, Brayker removes a black leather driving glove to reveal a strange symbol tattooed on his right palm. It is a circle with seven stars—four are part of the circle; the other three glow within. As he tries to steal a car at the local greasy spoon to continue his journey, Brayker is surprised in the act by a small boy and must abort the theft. Instead he takes refuge in a no-stars residence hotel, the only one in town. The Mission Inn is a desanctified old church that was converted into a rooming house in the '50s and has seen very little maintenance since. Arriving at the inn, Brayker takes another look at his hand. The glowing stars within the circle in his palm have realigned themselves on the outer ring. This is the omen he's been waiting for, and Brayker realizes he must now rally a septet of reluctant denizens of a ramshackle rooming house to defend their species.

Ship of Fools

The Mission Inn is truly a ship of fools run aground, since the only people left in Wormwood were too poor or too stupid to leave when the silver mines ran out and the interstate highway bypassed the town. The grande dame of the establishment is Irene Galvin, a no-nonsense battle-axe of a matron with a toothpick permanently

grafted between her front teeth. The lodgers include Cordelia, Wormwood's only professional woman—her profession is the world's oldest. There is



also Wally Enfield, a recently defrocked mailman; Uncle Willy, the town drunk; and Roach, Cordelia's bootish client and the fry cook at the local café. Lastly there is Jeryline, a beautiful young parolee who earns her keep as sort of a neo-Cinderella, cooking meals, sweeping up, and changing the sheets—which, given Cordelia's line of work, is no small task

Resisting Arrest

Tipped off that Brayker was the would-be car thief at the café, two members of the local constabulary, Sheriff Tupper and his rather dun-witted deputy, Bob, arrive at the rooming house to arrest him. With them is the Collector. Displaying an unctuous charm and impeccable manners, he has convinced the cops that Brayker's key is rightfully his. As proof, he produces an ancient wooden reliquary with a niche carved inside it that exactly fits the talisman. As Sheriff Tupper seizes the key and begins to arrest Brayker, he receives information from headquarters that *both* vehicles involved in the inferno were stolen, and moves to take the Collector into custody

Up to this point, viewers are not really certain whether Brayker or the Collector is the supernatural bad guy. The first clue the

audience gets is when the Collector resists arrest and punches out Sheriff Tupper—at which time his fist flies through the sheriff's face and out the back side of his head.

The Battle Is Joined

After Brayker brands the key into the Collector's cheek, the stage is set for a pitched battle over possession of the talisman. While Brayker tries to assert some sort of discipline and unity over the not-so-brave and not-so-noble little band of ordinary folk under siege in their own private Alamo, the Collector marshals his support troops, inscribing a cut in his palm and summoning up demons from a handful of greenish blood that he spatters to the ground. *The Homo sapiens* are badly outnumbered.

The demons waste no time assaulting the inn; Brayker's first task is to seal off all the entrances, a job for which the dark liquid in the key's vial is essential. He moves through the rooming house anointing each point of entry with a drop from the key. The liquid is blood, and a drop or two in a door-jamb or on a window ledge creates a neon red seal, like a big "Do Not Enter" sign to the demons. Those who try are vaporized.

An Ancient Burden

The only other way to do in a demon is to go for the eyes. Grisly eyeball removal has a long history in works of horror—it was

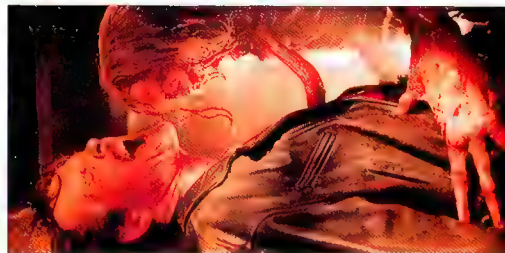


one of Max Gaines' original no-nos and a particular bugaboo to Fredric Werthman. In *Demon Knight*, however, it's a major weapon in the hands of the beleaguered humans.

Brayker's burden is indeed an ancient one. The original blood in the key came from Golgotha itself, but over the centuries it has been mixed with that of all who have carried the terrible burden. Each guardian of the amulet has refilled it with his own blood and passed it to his successor upon his death. Brayker has been the custodian since World War I, when he received it in the fields of France from a dying comrade (named Dickerson, after the film's director). With the key, he also inherited the 7-star tattoo on his palm. Tonight he will pass it to one of the other occupants of the Mission Inn.

Six, Five, Four, Three, Two...

The Collector and the demons begin a game of seven little Indians, whittling down the members of the party one by one. Irene the landlady loses an arm; tough old broad



that she is, it barely slows her down. What the demons cannot attain by full frontal assault, the Collector accomplishes by guile and cunning. He knows the all-too-human foibles of each member of the group, and preys on their weaknesses. He seduces Cordelia with her need to be loved, and wins Uncle Willy with booze. He tries to lure Jervine with promises of the good life in Paris... and fails. When Brayker learns that she has rebuffed the Collector, he knows that she is destined to be the next guardian. In a scene that parallels his own receipt of the key in 1917, he passes it—and the tattoo—to Jervine. Before dying, he gives her the same advice he had received: "Watch your back." When dawn breaks, she flees what's left of the seedy rooming house, with all the fires of hell in pursuit.

DEMON KNIGHT

Credits

Starring
Billy Zane
William Sadler
Jada Pinkett
Brenda Bakke
CCH Pounder
Thomas Haden Church
and
John Kassir
as the voice of the
Crypt Keeper
Executive Producers
Richard Donner
David Giler
Walter Hill
Joel Silver
Robert Zemeckis

Written by
Ethan Reiff
Cyrus Vons
Mark Bishop
Produced by
Gilbert Adler
Directed by
Ernest Dickerson

Director of Photography
Rick Bota

Production Designer
Christian Wagener

Film Editor
Stephen Lovejoy, ACE

Executive Music Producer
Michael Kamen

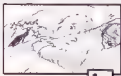
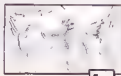
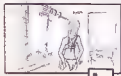
Score Composed by
Ed Shearmur

Coproducers
Alan Katz
Scott Nimerfro
Wendy Wanderman

Special Effects Makeup
Designed and Created by
Todd Masters

Costume Designer
Warden Neil

Some of the images used by director Dickerson evoke the Biblical legacy of the key (left), but the demons get to everyone eventually, including a young boy named Danny (above right), and even Brayker himself (top). Only Jervine survives.

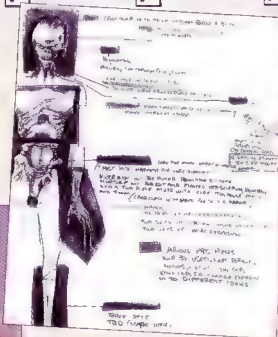


Todd Masters: Demon Master

When Universal first saw the production budget for *Demon Knight*, people began talking about making the demons guys in black suits with black sunglasses—sort of demonic Blues Brothers. "I said 'No way!'" recalls Todd Masters, whose company has provided makeup and special effects for *Tales from the Beginning*. "People who come to see a movie called *Demon Knight* want to see real demons."

Masters came up with a fresh, less expensive design concept. "We envisioned very thin, warlike people with hideous faces and exaggerated body parts. I used prosthetics and make-up to give them a frightening, feline look." The design was a solution to an economic problem, but it gave the producers a new creative direction. EC fans have noticed that the demons look like figures in some of the Graham Ingels drawings, but Masters did not refer to them in his work.

"Basically, we have these gaunt people running around in full body makeup. They're practically naked, with horrible masks, a crotch piece that holds a battery belt for the tails, extended fingers, and extended legs and hooves. And they do look like demons."



Masters drew a series of sketches with notes and sculpted a maquette to express his vision of the demons.



Each day the demon actors—Walter Phelan, Josh Patton, Kay Kimler, and Jimmy Roberts—arrived early to go through the long body makeup process before the day's shooting.



Everything was glued to the actor's bodies: the torso piece, ribcage piece, crotch piece (with radio-controlled tail), and stilts-like leg extensions. Then they stood out in the hot sun to be spray-painted with demonic latex before working 16-hour days, often involving strenuous gymnastic stunts. For the film, however, it was worth it. The sinister wraiths (right) are a big improvement over the sunglass-clad "killer yuppie" demons that were originally proposed.



Bordello of Blood

The Crypt Keeper's macabre sense of humor introduces audiences to *Bordello of Blood*, the second *Tales from the Crypt* movie, released in August of 1996. *Bordello* is the tale of the resurrection of Lilith, the Mother of All Vampires and the most bloodthirsty seductress in history. This hooker with a heart of fire (and brimstone) is played by redhead Angie Everhart (*Jade*, *Bullet*, and a fixture of the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit calendar). Lilith springs back to life with a vengeance at the hands of Vincent, a malevolent dwarf. It's taken him a decade to procure the four pieces of her shriveled heart, and now he reunites the pieces and places them on her chest. When she revives, she's hungry, *very* hungry—and quickly indulges her craving for organ meats—served blood rare. Lilith feasts on Vincent's travelling companions, and it is only his possession of an ancient talisman—the blood-filled key from *Demon Knight*—that prevents her from devouring him as well.

The key is the only holdover from *Demon Knight*; everything else about *Bordello* is new. Although *Demon* had its fair share of double entendres, *Bordello of Blood* pokes its tongue much farther into its cheek than its predecessor—and into other body cavities as well.

Beneath a funeral home, Lilith's vampire harlots show their johns a real good time (below left), but clientele turnover is very rapid. Some end up in the mortuary's embalming room (below right).



Lilith, played by super-model Angie Everhart (left), finds that Rafe Guttman (Dennis Miller) is just her (blood) type.



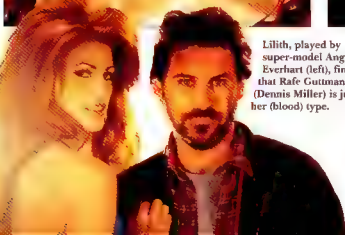
The Madam from Hell

With a bevy of lovely young vampires to titillate patrons, Lilith—truly the Madam from Hell—sets up shop in the heart of the Bible Belt, turning on her red light in a hideaway conveniently located beneath the McCutcheon Mortuary. A coded password (ask for “the Cunningham Wake”) and an E-ticket coffin ride through the funeral home's crematorium bring clients into her parlor, where girls in various stages of deshabille entertain the clientele. For the johns, however, it's a one-way trip to a one-night stand—there are no repeat customers. Lilith's ladies set up the guys, then she comes in to

finish them off in a manner that gives “deep kissing” a whole new dimension.

A Missing Brother/ A Rock 'n' Roll Preacher

One of Lilith's patrons is a young punk named Caleb (Corey Stand by Me Feldman). Into heavy metal, black leather, and body piercing, Caleb visits Lilith's brothel in the company of his friends and fellow sociopaths,



Hunting vampires is probably easier than making a movie about it."

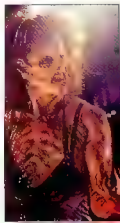
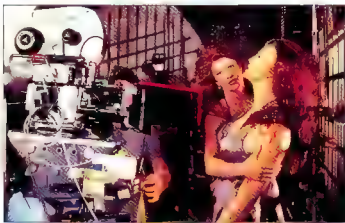
—Bordello cowriter A.L. Katz

going AWOL from the "normal" suburban home he shares with his sister, Katherine Blond, comely, and virginal, Katherine Verdoux (Enka Eleniak—late of *Baywatch* and the second generation Elly Mae in the movie version of *The Beverly Hillbillies*) is as

straight-arrow as her brother is twisted. She is a devout follower of rock 'n' roll televangelist Reverend Jimmy Current (Chris Sarandon, *Fright Night*, *Child's Play*). Current broadcasts from a high-tech Crystal Cathedral, outfitted with laser beams, a

Movie-making is a collaborative medium. The morphing of Liliith at the film's finale involves a small army of camera and sound operators, plus special effects personnel who manipulate various parts of her increasingly repulsive anatomy.

Puppeteers (far left) operate the Liliith "doll" by remote control. For some scenes, Angie Everhart was in Makeup for up to six hours as technicians layered on Liliith's latex appliances (near left and below). Some sequences utilized Everhart's "better half" (lower left), but makeup and prosthetics effects coordinator Chris Nelson designed a gaping 20-inch axe wound as a customized accessory for her purple gown. (He also made twenty-five sets of fangs.)



BORDELLO OF BLOOD

Credits

Starring

Dennis Miller
Erika Eleniak
Angie Everhart
Chris Sarandon
Corey Feldman
and

John Kassir
as the voice of the
Crypt Keeper

Executive Producers

Richard Donner
David Giler
Walter Hill
Joel Silver
Robert Zemeckis

Story by

Bob Gale &
Robert Zemeckis

Screenplay by

A.L. Katz & Gilbert Adler

Produced and

Directed by
Gilbert Adler

Director of Photography

Tom Priestley

Production Designer

Greg Melton

Film Editor

Stephen Lovejoy, ACE

Executive Music Producer

Michael Kamen

Score Composed by

Chris Boardman

Coproducers

Alan Katz
Alexander Collett

Visual Effects by
Avaliable Light Ltd.

Additional Prosthetic

Effects Designed
& Created by
Todd Masters Company

Filmed on location in Vancouver, the *Tales* production team created a deliberately over-the-top set at the BC Pavilion, located downtown at the site of EXPO '86. On the altar of Reverend Jimmy Current's Crystal Cathedral-type sanctuary, they constructed a 28-foot motorized cross, which split down the middle to accommodate a rising 12-foot animatronic devil.



and system security worthy of the Mormon Tabernacle, and an animatronic devil that he summons (and vanquishes) on cue. Katherine works for the minister as an all-purpose administrative assistant-cum-adoring sycophant. Turns out, however, that the Reverend Current—or JC, as he's known to his disciples—has another employee—a swarthy midget named Vincent.

An Insolvent Gumshoe

Frustrated because the police won't look for her brother, Katherine hires down-and-out detective Rafe Guttman (Dennis Miller, *Disclosure*, *The Net*, and of course, *Dennis Miller Live*). Rafe gets a hot tip on where to find some hot action, learns that Caleb was last seen headed for a whorehouse, and pays a call on the McCutcheon Mortuary.

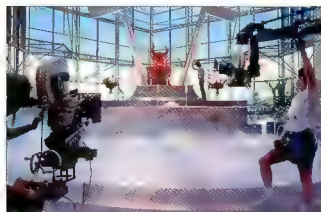
A Pact with the Devil

Knowing her brother went to the whorehouse but not his ultimate fate, Katherine's close brush with Sodom and Gomorrah prompts her to ask Current for permission to make a fundamentalist documentary about the evils of lust. "Onward Christian soldier," he says, blessing her crusade for Current and his flock, the fight with Satan is a daily struggle. His next appointment is with another true believer—"Brother" Vincent the dwarf.

The Reverend Current, it seems, sponsored Vincent's quest for Lilith's heart and her resurrection—all in the name of the Lord. Jimmy believed that Lilith and her harlots would rid the world of adulterers, one fornicator at a time, but now her whorehouse has taken on a life of its own. Vincent,

"These guys want to scare the pants off you and then make you laugh."

—Dennis Miller



Denied entry to the Cunningham Wake, Rafe commits a little breaking and entering and finds a piece of Caleb's nose jewelry in the embalming room.

Just Her Type

When Rafe finally takes his own coffin ride into the brothel, he meets up with Tamara, Lilith's newest recruit. Tamara is into B&D, or as he calls it, "medieval foreplay." Only by turning the tables, as it were, on Tamara does Rafe manage to escape from the torture devices in the brothel's dungeon room. In making his getaway, however, he leaves his wallet behind. Tamara still has a bit of Rafe's blood on her fingers, and Lilith decides he's just her type—blood type, that is. In her own way, she considers Rafe a delicacy. "I haven't tasted this since Ivan the Terrible," she says with gusto as she sucks on Tamara's digits, "and that was eight centuries ago. We gotta keep this guy alive!"

for his part, is convinced that he should be getting more personal financial reward from the boidello and is bent on making his own deal with Lilith to hijack the operation.

In disguise, Current trails Vincent to his rendezvous with Lilith at a sleazy strip joint, only to be interrupted by Katherine's documentary film crew. Current, Vincent, and Lilith hightail it out the back door, but not before Katherine has filmed an "Interview with the Vampire" for her documentary. In the showdown in the back alley, Vincent abandons Current and throws in with Lilith. In the ensuing fracas, the ancient key is shattered.

The Truth Is Transparent

Katherine rushes her videotape back to the studio. She recognizes Reverend Current, despite his disguise, but is even more amazed to find that her footage shows her pointing her microphone at an empty

During ministry broadcasts, the devil rises so that Rev. Current can vanquish him, but with the preacher out of the picture and Lilith on the loose, the fate of the world rests in the hands of Katherine Verdoux (Erika Eleniak, above right) and detective Rafe Guttman (Miller).

hair. There is no image of Lilith on film. While she is showing her footage to Rafe, she gets a panicky phone call from Caleb, asking to meet them in an abandoned power plant.

When they find him, Caleb is alive—or rather, undead. Rafe is knocked unconscious as he and Katherine attempt to get away. When he comes to, Katherine is nowhere to be found, and he's strapped to a hospital bed, trying to explain how vampire prostitutes are taking over the city to an incredulous cop.

A nurse enters, asks the officer's help with the patient in the other bed, then sinks her fangs into his neck—it's Rafe's old nemesis, Tamara. Defending himself with garlic salad dressing, Guttman and Tamara scuffle, disturbing the patient in the other bed—none other than Whoopi Goldberg. Tamara is done in, not by Rafe, but by a shaft of sunlight. Although she is wearing sunblock to protect herself, the light hits her skin through a tear in her uniform and she vaporizes.

The Water of Life and Death

Rafe flees the hospital and heads for the funeral home. Using his car as a battering ram, he crashes through the mortuary wall, armed with his pistol and—a neon Super Soaker. There he finds the Reverend Current. Outfitted with spikes, a hammer, and a knife, the preacher has come to try to undo the havoc he has wrought. Realizing that Current is still on the side of the angels, Rafe tosses him a water pistol.

Both the pistol and the Super Soaker are filled with holy water, deadly for the vampire trollops, but useless against Lilith herself.

"The only way to kill her," says Current, "is to draw and quarter her heart." Current and Guttman drench the whores in a soggy shootout. Hookers melt, sizzle, ooze, and explode as the brothel is destroyed. The two rescue

Katherine, then take on Lilith. Rafe takes a Lizzie Borden whack at her with an axe. Down but not out, she retreats to regroup, but not before she mortally wounds Jimmy. With his dying breath, Current tells Katherine to broadcast the word from the cathedral



Joel Silver's other commitments precluded his involvement in *Bordello of Blood* on a daily basis, but he still worked closely with Gil Adler's production team. "I put in my two cents," he says.

"I'm very proud of the fact that we were able to take this *Tales from the Crypt* idea and build it into something that is really like a cottage industry."

Joel Silver

The Vampire Gospels

With Rafe manning the camera, Katherine stands on the altar/stage, preparing to comply with JC's last wish. As she does so, however, the Devil figure rises from beneath the platform, splitting the cross. Lilith, it seems, has taken over the control room, generating special effects all her own. She handcuffs Rafe to a railing, then goes for Katherine. In the ensuing catfight, Katherine is definitely getting the worst of it until Rafe gets to the laser control panel with his foot. Stretching himself to the limit, he painstakingly manipulates the laser with his toe until he finally succeeds in using its beam to separate

Lilith's auricles and ventricles into their four component parts. Morphing rapidly into a hideous monster, Lilith comes after him, but disintegrates before she can wreak her revenge.

Sex and Sunblock

With the aid of a rabbi, Rafe and Katherine incinerate the last of Lilith in the McCutcheon Mortuary crematorium. As they leave the mortuary with Lilith's ashes in a little wooden reliquary, all of

Katherine's sanctimonious demeanor has vanished. Now playful and more than a little flirty, it looks as though the smoldering attraction between Rafe and Katherine might finally burst into flame.

However, when Rafe comments on her perfume, she tell him it's sunblock—just before she sinks her fangs into his neck.

That's a wrap!



A Kinder, Gentler Keeper

For two years, *Tales from the Cryptkeeper*, the kiddie version of *Tales from the Crypt* from Nelvana Productions, haunted ABC's Saturday morning cartoon lineup. Executive producer Toper Taylor saw the Crypt Keeper as an ideal candidate to replace the *Beetlejuice* series. As he told *Fangoria*'s Anthony Ferrante, "We saw there was a need for another horror-type property. Those have always worked, as far back as *Scooby Doo*, but ABC was clearly not ready for EC horror on Saturday morning. We're a lot more cautious with regard to bloodshed and the acts of violence underneath it all."

Nelvana retained child psychologist Brian Newmark to review the scripts and make sure they were suitable for the target audience. They had originally considered using Kevin Yagher's *Keeper* as the host, but they eventually decided that the puppet was a bit too "boo" for very small children, and went with a cartoon likeness instead. To further take the edge off him, they gave him some long-dormant but nevertheless familiar sidekicks—the Vault Keeper and the Old Witch—who traded wisecracks with him and bantered with one another over who was going to take control of the show.

John Kassir is the voice for the animated Crypt Keeper, as he is for the nighttime edition, but he found that adapting to a G-rated version of the character took some adjustment. "Nelvana created a kinder, gentler personality for the children's Crypt Keeper, and it feels a little uncharacteristic at times," he admits. Although the cartoon series only ran for two seasons, it spawned an astonishingly diverse collection of Crypt merchandise and memorabilia.

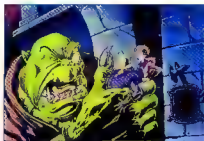
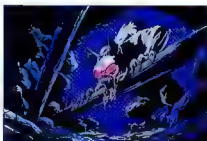
SECRETS
of the
CRYPT KEEPER'S
HAUNTED HOUSE



With the Crypt Keeper as "jeer-leader,"

Secrets of the Crypt Keeper's Haunted House is a new TV game show in which young contestants face challenges such as The Incredible Shrinking Room and The Swamp from Hell—environments enhanced by computer-generated virtual reality and Hollywood FX technology.

TALES
from the
CRYPT KEEPER



The *Tales from the Cryptkeeper* cartoon series had its share of spooky images, but each episode was a morality play for children portraying the consequences of unprincipled behavior.

Buying Up the Past

A "collectible" is anything that people collect, whether or not that item had any intrinsic market value when it was first produced. Captain Midnight decoder rings are a great example. So are baseball cards and political campaign buttons. So are bunnies on Parade. Max Gaines' original 1933 giveaway comic books that were offered as inducements for purchasing Wheatena and Canada Dry.

Everything about the 1939 New York World's Fair is collectible—as is anything about *The Wizard of Oz*. "If they'd made a *Wizard of Oz* condom in '39 when the Judy Garland movie came out, it would qualify," says Jerry Weiss, comics collectibles consultant for Sotheby's, only half in jest.

Generally speaking, the hottest collectibles, like those from the World's Fair and *The Wizard of Oz*, are associated with cultural phenomena—events that

- became shared experiences that bonded us together;
- caused us to see the world differently; or
- caused controversy.

YESTERDAY'S MEMORIES... TOMORROW'S TREASURES

Tales from the Crypt bonded kids together.

It set a new standard for comic art and storyline and changed the way readers thought about horror comics. And it was awash in controversy. As a bona fide cultural phenomenon on all three grounds, virtually anything associated with

Tales from the Crypt, in either its early or later years, is collectible.



All EC comics from the 1950s are collectible, but first issues and special editions such as these are particularly valuable. Copies that don't look their age are the most prized by connoisseurs.

10¢

EC comic books cost just a dime when they were first published; now they can fetch hundreds of dollars. Generally they are worth considerably more than other comic books of their time, even those that originally outsold them on the newsstand.

Much of this financial premium is in effect a "banned books" bonus. Dr. Fredric Wertham is just one of a long line of unsuccessful

Nearly broke and unable to market *Shock* #3, Bill Gaines ordered almost the entire print run of 250,000 destroyed. Less than 200 copies were hand-bound, making this issue the "Hope Diamond" of EC comics.

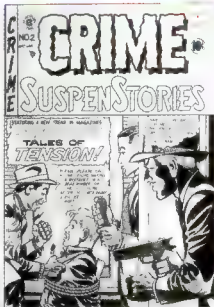
guardians of morality throughout history, a skein of shortsighted individuals that extends from the Renaissance popes who tried to exterminate the "heretical" works of Galileo, to the prudes of the 1960s who risked deafness (not to mention brain damage) in a bootless effort to decipher the sub rosa dirty lyrics in Louis L'Amour, to those who would now pat his leaves over the works of Robert Mapplethorpe. Although generation after generation of censors have been surprised at the outcome, over the centuries these efforts to bowdlerize works of art, music, and literature have almost uniformly produced the same result. Unwittingly the censors' efforts made the objects of their wrath more precious, the polar opposite of what they'd intended.

Early fan-addicts who squinted away copies of *Tales from the Crypt*, whether they did so with a clairvoyant eye toward eventual financial gain or merely out of a packrat mentality, find that their comic book dimes have realized increases in value that exceeded all but the most bullish stocks on the Dow Jones Industrial Average.

Today a pristine copy of an early *Tales from the Crypt* is worth \$1,500, a 15,000% return on a 10¢ investment.

Even those who started collecting in the 1960s or 1970s and paid prices that seemed at the time like sheer gouging—\$2 for a 10¢ comic—find that their investment has handsomely outperformed the market.

The *Overstreet Guide*, a price catalogue published by first-generation EC fan-addict Bob Overstreet, monitors the pulse of the comic book market, from the first comics of the 1930s through the most contemporary. Overstreet works with a network of dealers across the country who funnel data to him about prices and trends; his guide is the comic equivalent of the automobile *Blue Book*. Year after year *Tales from the Crypt* and the other EC *New Trend* comics are among those reported to be the most valuable, provided they are in excellent condition.



Fans almost always begin by amassing comic books, but serious collectors often move on to purchase the original pen-and-ink artwork. Original comic art, such as this Johnny Craig cover owned by jazz guitarist Grant Geissman, is the hottest segment of the collectibles market.

The Ravages of Time

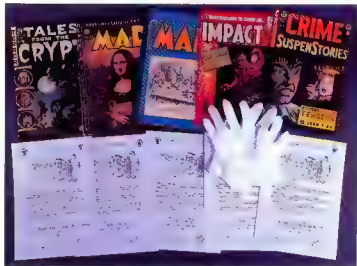
Comic books don't age well, and keeping them in nice condition is a problem that only increases with time.

Like picture postcards, and movie posters, comic books are "ephemera"—a fancy name for stuff that was never meant to last. From the flimsy rust prone staple that holds them together to the cheap, highly acidic newsprint, comic books were designed to be read a few times and tossed away. Because these mementos of the past are so vulnerable, the highest prices are garnered by comics that are in "mint" or "near mint" condition—meaning they've never or almost never been read.

When *Tales* comics were new in the fifties, the main enemies of preservation were all too visible. They were familial—compulsively tidy moms rooting out "junk" and little brothers armed with crayons and peanut butter. Today, the enemy is far more insidious because

it is invisible. It is the air itself—exposure to heat, humidity, sunlight, and smog cause irreversible damage. To keep the paper from yellowing and turning either moldy or brittle, collectors store their comics in archival envelopes. Serious collectors handle their comics as if they were radioactive, using the same gloves worn by film editors. Nevertheless, repeated contact inevitably diminishes the value.

Gaines began selling mint-condition EC file copies in 1990. Each one came with a pair of film editor's gloves, and a Certificate of Authenticity.



Tales from the File

Ball Gaines was a saver—he was sentimental about his comic creations and felt a personal attachment both to the works and to the people who produced them. He also knew or at least suspected that his *New Trend* comics had the potential to appreciate in value. Among the items he saved for posterity were a dozen file copies of each EC comic book. Four were kept for family members—his children Cathy, Wendy, and Mike, and his wife Annie. Beginning in 1990 the remaining copies were sold, some individually, some in complete sets, together with initialed certificates of authenticity—and a pair of film editor's gloves. Because they had been carefully stored, they had not significantly yellowed. It was as if

they were brand new—those who saw them said they still smelled of fresh ink. Not surprisingly they brought three to four times the value indicated in the *Overstreet Price Guide*.

There are other high-grade collections of EC comics, most notably what has become known as the "White Mountain Collection," amassed by a man from the granite hills of New Hampshire whose car dealer father had been a connoisseur of vintage automobiles. Inspired by the concours standard of his father's collection, he bought one of almost every EC and stockpiled them meticulously in metal file cabinets, where they were insulated from fluctuations in heat and humidity. Pristine comics such as the EC file copies and the White Mountain Collection redefined the meaning of "mint" in the collectibles world. New sources do surface from time to time. It's possible that the mother lode of mint EC comics remains entombed with the 40-year-old Velveeta in some decommissioned fallout shelter in Winnemucca, Nevada—or anywhere in the high desert where the air is dry and cold.

Gaines, Fred von Bernewitz (center), and Ted E. White (right) are shown in December 1955 poring over bound volumes of EC comics. Von Bernewitz is the compiler of the *Complete EC Checklist*, which indexed all EC *New Trend* comics, and is a valuable resource for collectors.

Grant Geissman: The Ultimate Collector

Grant Geissman is an accomplished jazz musician who leads a double life as one of the foremost collectors of EC and MAD materials in the world.

"I'm considered what's called a second-generation fan, and I got into it when I discovered MAD when I was about eight years old. It was this whole window on the adult world—I was astounded that such a publication could exist and you could ride your bike down to the drugstore and pick it up. When the Ian Ballantine EC reprints showed up at the bookstore in 1964, I bought them and recognized Wally Wood and Joe Orlando and all the MAD guys. From then on, I was hooked. I hung on to my Ballantine EC books, and I read 'em to death. When I found out that you could actually go back and buy the original comics, I started doing that as well. I began getting in touch with collectors and dealers. "When I began collecting, I could still buy all the original comics for a few dollars. In 1967 I was going to send \$3 to a dealer to buy MAD #20, but my dad urged me to save my money for a few weeks so that I could buy MAD #1. I'm glad he did. It was a thrill to own it—as well as a bargain."

"I've actually had several collections over the years, but I've sold pieces when I wanted to buy other things. Recently, I sold a number of comics to purchase original paintings from Al Feldstein and Johnny Craig. I'm one of the few people who has tried to collect all the comic books, all the related paraphernalia, and some of the good paintings, too. For example, I have a pair of the EC cufflinks that Gaines had made for his staff, and a charm from the EC charm bracelet that Bill gave to the ladies. Stuff like that is what pushes my buttons. It's just more personal than the comic books."

Geissman toured with Chuck Mangione and played guitar on the album *Feels So Good*. His tenth and most recent solo album is *Business As Usual*. In addition, he is the author of *Collectibly MAD*.

"I was a guitar player early in life. I practiced diligently but my comic book collection was always a little closet hobby that I had. My mother always said, 'Why are you wasting your time with this crap? It'll never amount to anything!' My real life was playing in bands, but I never threw the stuff away. It was always there. Now I have my own house and this, well, shrine."

Collectors of original art frame it for display (below); many also pursue specialty artwork. A 1972 limited edition print of the cover art from *Weird Science-Fantasy* #29 was hand-colored and signed by artist Frank Frazetta, and marketed by Russ Cochran.



Guitarist Grant Geissman, author of *Collectibly MAD* (Kitchen Sink Press), poses in his home museum with his collection of EC memorabilia.



The Cult of Personality

The Crypt Keeper is a bona fide star, and at least as many people tune in to revel in his grisly cornpone humor as to see the episodes themselves. The persona of the Crypt Keeper is the medium by which *Tales from the Crypt* fans identify with the TV show and the films. "The whole zeitgeist of the horror phenomenon hangs on the Crypt Keeper; this wisecracking Groucho Marx-y kind of character," says collector/musician Grant Geissman, "and for some reason that grabs people. We've always been fascinated with scary stuff—it's a way to measure reality against fiction. I think it's connected to the urban myths described by Jan Harold Brunvand. These are widely held beliefs, stories that everyone thinks are true, like the choking Doberman who has fingers in his throat, the couple necking on lovers' lane who hear radio bulletins warning of a one-armed murderer and later find a prosthetic hook dangling from the handle of their car door.... Some of what goes on in the TV series is a little over the top—deliberately—so. What they've done is take the EC stuff to the next level. They're titillating and outrageous for today, just like EC was titillating and outrageous for the '50s. It's just been turned up ten notches because it's the '90s and the Crypt Keeper ties it all together."

Future Antiques

Jack Wohl, president of *Tales from the Crypt Productions*, is the marketing mastermind behind the growing array of contemporary Crypt Keeper collectibles, and is personally involved in their creative development. He also coproduced *Secrets of the Crypt Keeper's Haunted House*, a new action/adventure game show which debuted this fall on CBS. There are Crypt T-shirts, a "museum-quality" scale-model Crypt Keeper kit from Screamin' Products, and "Have Yourself a Scary Little Christmas," a Crypt-Keeper as-Bing-Crosby album of Ghoultide favorites. Backed by the Salivating Army Band and the Santa Clarita All Ghoul Choir, the Keeper moons such old favorites as

"Deck the Halls with Parts of Charlie." The CD also includes a reprint of "...And All Through the House," the classic Johnny Craig *Vault of Horror* story (and HBO series premiere) about the murderess whose young daughter admits a homicidal maniac into the house because he's dressed as St. Nick. There's a trio of GhouLunatic cold-cast porcelain statues by William Stout. There are *Tales from the Crypt* trading cards with scenes from the TV series, and a *Tales from the Crypt* phone card for making toll calls away from home. There's even a *Tales from the Crypt* pinball machine.

The softer *Tales from the Cryptkeeper* cartoon series, targeted at younger viewers, has also generated a host

of spinoff products. Marketing of these items peaks in the fall to coincide with Halloween, a holiday that has been growing rapidly in commercial importance. Novelty items include *Cryptkeeper* Halloween masks and costumes, cylinders of Halloween candy topped with *Cryptkeeper* finger puppets, and a Barbie-size *Cryptkeeper* doll that cackles just like John Kassir. Some of the goods are conventional costume and magic store fare, such as hyperthemic Googley Eyes (reminiscent of Marty Feldman's—or the Cookie Monster's—except they glow in the

dark), Ghoul Guts, and Cadaver Putty that very much resembles its generic cousin, Silly Putty. What makes them collectible is that they have been packaged with the kinder, gender Cryptkeeper of the Nelvana cartoon series on the label.

Are Ghoul Guts and Cadaver Putty the anchors of tomorrow's collection of *Tales from the Crypt* treasures? It's possible, says Jerry Weist of Sotheby's. Survivorship is important—the rarer an item is, the more value it has—even if it was made in the millions and only a few remain. "As long as you have a mother or fiancée who throws it out—or a Religious Right that buries it—there's going to be a market for it twenty-five years later," he adds with a chuckle.



Some collectors seek out new works with the first generation keeper, such as Al Feldstein's "The Original EC Crypt Keeper & Friends" (above). Others prefer the "lifesize" 1990s Crypt Keeper replica (below) from Spencer Gifts. (Naked lady not included).



COLLECTIBLES FROM THE CRYPT



THE
CRYPT
COLLECTIBLES



Three Dimensions series

Three Dimensions series



IT'S ALL HERE

By David Karpman

Warner's *Seeger* has produced a limited edition set of cold-cast porcelain statues of the EC comic version of the Crypt Keeper, the Vault Keeper, and the Old Man, sculpted by William Stout.

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

The Crypt Keeper himself has generated a lot of collectible items for fans of the television series and of the two feature films. Shown below are Crypt Keeper trading cards, such as the novelizations of the movies, and a T-shirt series, each containing the signature of the TV show.



IT'S ALL HERE

Bill Gaines had about two dozen sets of gold-plated EC Comics pins (left) made for the men on his staff in the early 1960s. The pins received larger EC charms (right). These pins are highly prized by collectors.



Tales T-shirts, with or without the image of the Crypt Keeper, are popular with younger collectors. Some were given away as prizes in a *Tales from the Crypt* contest.



Merchandise

Salvatore's Tales from the Crypt cartoon series generated a multitude of collectible novelty items of special interest to kids.



Cryptkeeper goodies include candy, Googley Eyes, Cuddler Puffy, white wax and horror action figures. Not all novelty items are the cartoon Cryptkeeper image. Some, such as the dog-eared Cryptkeeper model (far left) and Cryptkeeper dolls (below), are based on the cartoon series, not the movie. (McGowan)



about music books.

The black-and-white *Ballantine* EC reprints of the mid-1960s rekindled interest in EC comics, and have themselves become collectible. So are the *Ghoulnite* books.



A Worldwide Boom in Tales Memorabilia

There are thousands upon thousands of people seriously collecting comic books," says Weist. "It's a global phenomenon. Sotheby's last auction had over 750 people on the floor, but the real auction was the 1800 to 2000 other absentee buyers who were bidding long distance from places like Scotland, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Tokyo, Seoul, Sydney, and Toronto.

"Back issues of *Tales from the Crypt* are the highest in demand," continues Weist, "higher than *Weird Science*, higher than *MAD*. People love the title above all others. *Tales from the Crypt* has more of a dramatic ring to it than *Vault of Horror* or *Haunt of Fear*, and of course the Crypt Keeper has always been a more popular figure—he's the #1 comic book character of that whole era, the Superman of his time."

By far the hottest segment of the collectibles market, however, is original comic art. When Bill Gaines began releasing the EC original illustration boards for sale at auction, numerous collectors of comic books segued into collecting art. The auctions, first through Russ Cochran and later through Sotheby's, brought record prices and spirited bidding. Many of those who have collected comics for any length of time know one another, at least by name or reputation. Familiar rivals vie amicably (but intensely) with one another for the choicest lots, some of which have realized astonishing increases in value in a very short time. "A *Tales from the Crypt* Feldstein cover, like #24, which ten years ago sold in Russ's auction for \$1,400 and five years ago would have been worth \$2,700, was valued at \$4,000 two years ago. You couldn't get it now for \$15,000," declares Jerry Weist. "Overstreet's comic book price guide has been coming out now for a quarter of a century, but now there's an Overstreet's for collecting original comic artwork." The blossoming of the market for originals occurred for any number of reasons, the foremost of which is the mystique and magic behind the fact that there's only one of what you've got.

Like Barbies in their original boxes, every hair in place, or Steiff teddy bears that still have their FAO Schwarz price tags, there is something sterile and more than a

little sad about a perfect comic book that's never given a kid a thrill. The passion for immaculate copies of old comics—and the prices people are willing to pay for them—baffles some of those most intimately involved in creating them. "Collectors of old comic books are paying \$200 to \$250 for a lousy ten-cent magazine!" marvels *Tales* cocreator Al Feldstein. "Bill Gaines went

to the comic book conventions, but now I go because it's really an ego trip. I see these dealer displays and they've got a *Tales from the Crypt* Number 22 or 25 with my artwork on it and there's a price of \$475 on it. I didn't get \$475 to do the original artwork and the eight-page lead story together!! It's funny...I say to a dealer, 'Would you like me to sign that?' After he realizes who I am he pauses, like a ten-second pause, because he's turning it over and over in his head, wondering whether my signature

would make his copy more valuable because it's mine or less valuable because his copy would no longer be mint."

It's an agonizing question that sparks controversy among condition-conscious collectors, a notoriously persnickety lot. A first edition of *Dracula* signed by Bram Stoker is worth more than an unsigned copy, but *Dracula* is not a comic book. Although some would say that Feldstein's John Hancock adds value to a vintage comic, Jerry Weist of Sotheby's maintains that, "Generally, any autograph to the cover of a comic book sends the value down because basically comic book people are anal fanatics. If an *Action Comics* Number 1 (Superman's debut) were signed by (Superman creators) Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel, it would be worth less." In other words, mint is mint—as if it had just come off the presses, even before it had been placed on the newsstand where it might have been...handled. (Many of the finest surviving EC comics originally belonged to subscribers, whose issues arrived by mail and were never subjected to the pawings and manlings of the newsrack.)



The Crypt Keeper even has his own place in cyberspace. At the *Tales from the Crypt* website, <http://www.cryptnet.com>, net surfers can pull down video and audio clips, and look at original screenplays. The website will also be selling Crypt merchandise.



They don't call me a keeper for nuthin. Heh, heh, heh.



Bill Gaines

An Appreciation

When Bill Gaines passed away in 1992, his place in the history of American popular culture was already secure. Most people knew him primarily as the godfather of **MAD** magazine, but with the ongoing success of **Tales from the Crypt** on TV, many more fans have come to appreciate how broad his vision really was. Not only did he work intensely with Al Feldstein to develop EC's horror and science fiction story lines, he also served as the creator and sustainer of EC's atmosphere of hothouse looniness — a benevolent bedlam that fostered some of the finest comic artwork ever produced in the United States.

"EC was an amazingly happy group of very creative people. There was genuine caring and affection," remembers Nancy Gaines fondly.

"I used to sit in the office opening mail while Bill and Al plotted out the stories. It was such fun to be there."

Nancy, who came to work in EC's subscription department at the age of seventeen, married Bill in November of 1955, just as the EC empire was crumbling. "On the plane returning from our honeymoon he said, 'I didn't want to tell you this before we left, but we're bankrupt.' It didn't bother me, because I knew Bill could do anything."

Bill and Nancy were married for fifteen years and had three children, Cathy, Wendy, and Mike, all of whom were born after the heady days of the horror comics. Even after EC's demise, however, Gaines' offbeat creativity and macabre sense of fun didn't leave him when he went home from the office. "We went to zeppelin shows (Bill was an avid collector...He took us on picnics in graveyards. He was a wonderful father!" says Cathy Gaines Mifsud enthusiastically. "He always had fun things for us to do — not normal things. He and I spent one summer going to every French restaurant in New York City

No matter where we went, he taught you something. He put a clever twist on it, something cute or funny, to make you want to learn and remember. I hear myself doing the same thing with my own children."

Mike Gaines runs his own business and keeps watch over the memorabilia in the family vault. By Bill's arrangement, Wendy Gaines Buccì became the guardian of the EC legacy after her father's death. With the help of

Gaines' longstanding advisors, Jack Albert and Dorothy Crouch, she makes sure that contemporary uses of EC images and materials are in keeping with the intent of the originals. Her responsibility has given Wendy an enhanced appreciation for her father and his work.

"It all makes sense now. When I was younger, EC didn't really mean anything to me, but I've come to have an enormous respect for the material."

Wendy Buccì also admires the artwork. "I understand about Feldstein, Davis, Craig, Kamen and the others, and the impact they had on the world."

Bill himself was also aware of their impact, both on the world at large and on his own world, and acknowledged it throughout his lifetime. Although he owned the EC artwork outright, when Russ Cochran's reprints began generating money and when the sales of the original illustration boards began, Gaines sent royalty payments to his former artists. Bill even tracked down the reclusive Graham Ingels, who had repudiated his association with horror, and convinced him to take the money, if only to donate it to charity. Payments to surviving artists have continued since his death.

"The public may remember Bill best for **MAD**, but **Tales from the Crypt** and the other horror comics always had a very special place in his heart — as did the people who made them," says Annie Gaines, who first met Bill in 1972. They were married in 1987.

"He loved the material, and he loved the fact that there were all these loyal fans who wouldn't let it be forgotten."

He was so pleased when it became a successful TV series. It was a great vindication."

After seeing his horror comics reviled as instigators of juvenile delinquency, Bill Gaines lived long enough to see them become sought-after collectibles. He also made the deal that brought them to life on television, reaching a new level of popularity with a whole new generation of fans. "After my father died," recalls Wendy Buccì, "someone had drawn a cartoon of Dad standing in heaven with his new wings on, facing his Maker. He was saying, 'God, put me in Fredric Wertham's section.' It would be the final justice, EC style

A FINAL GIFT FROM THE CRYPT

In the waning days of December 1995, Sotheby's consultant Jerry Weist and his lifelong friend and fellow fan-addict, Roger Hill, made their annual pilgrimage to West Plains to visit with Russ Cochran. Weist was there on a busman's holiday to select some artwork for a forthcoming Sotheby's auction.

On New Year's Day, 1996, Weist opened a drawer in one of the tall antique wooden filing cabinets in Cochran's recycled bank vault, unfolded the butcher-paper wrappings on one of packages, and was bewildered. "It wasn't

anything I recognized," says

Weist, "but the light was very bad. I carried the package out to show Russ and Roger, but they didn't recognize it either. Then I

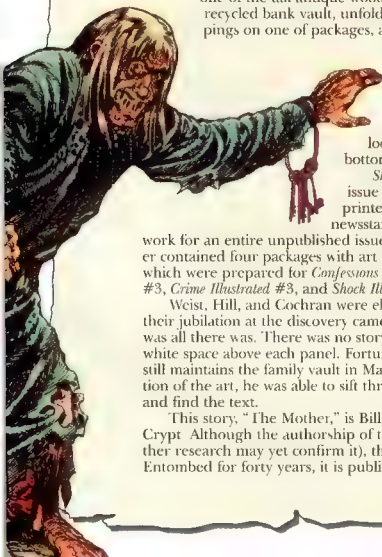
looked at the markings on the bottom. It said *Shock Illustrated* #4."

Shock Illustrated #3 was the last issue of *Picto-Fiction* that was ever printed, but it never made it to the newsstands. Weist had found the art-

work for an entire unpublished issue of *Picto-Fiction*. The file drawer contained four packages with art for nineteen complete stories, which were prepared for *Confessions Illustrated* #3, *Terror Illustrated* #3, *Crime Illustrated* #3, and *Shock Illustrated* #4.

Weist, Hill, and Cochran were elated, but fast on the heels of their jubilation at the discovery came the realization that artwork was all there was. There was no story on the illustration board, just white space above each panel. Fortunately, Mike Gaines, Bill's son, still maintains the family vault in Manhattan. Armed with a description of the art, he was able to sift through the family mementos and find the text.

This story, "The Mother," is Bill Gaines' last gift from the Crypt. Although the authorship of the story is still uncertain (further research may yet confirm it), the artwork is by Jack Davis. Entombed for forty years, it is published here for the first time.



THE MOTHER



squatted like a giant misshapen frog.

so trustingly in her own. The children . . .
a boy of nine and a girl of eight, with
pale pinched face . . . were frightened.
She could feel their fright.

whined, shivering.

soothed him. "We . . . we don't have any
other . . ."

In the darkness, the mother's eyes turned to her husband. Not
angrily. Not even accusingly. There was no feeling of any kind
left in her for this great hulking unshaven man with the reek
of cheap whiskey perpetually hovering about him.

"Well?" The alcohol-thickened voice snarled a challenge.
The bleary eyes focused. "Wha' did you want t' do? Sleep in
the street? We got thrown out of that crummy furnished flat we

"We wouldn't have been put out if we'd paid every month, Frank!" The mother was patient - eternally, irrevocably, forever patient.

The father, however, was not. He swung at her suddenly, savagely.

Duty fingers left a harsh imprint on her cheek.



"Meaning I'm a bum, eh?" A red, thick-featured ace was shoved close to her own. "Meaning I used our dough for booze, instead of paying the rent, eh? Okay! So what? I found this place, didn't I? I'm taking care of my family, and I! So don't you give me any of your I pay near? Nobody gives Frank Krebs any lip! Nobody."



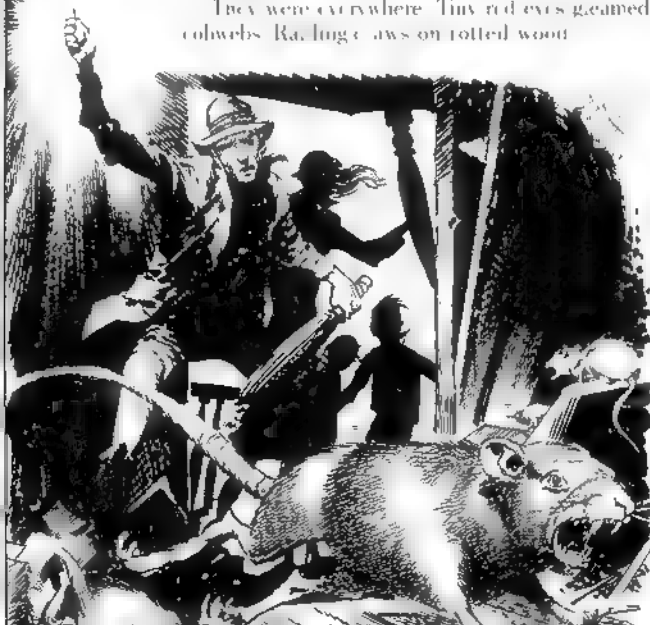
The snarl trailed off. "C'm on. There's beds inside. Nobody's been near it is dangerous."

The mother followed, holding tightly to the cold trembling little hands.

There was no door. Just a black, yawning cavity. Krebs struck a match. And, as air lit, there was a running, a skittering, a scratching.

"Rats!"

They were everywhere. Tiny red eyes gleamed in dark corners. Musty grey ladies beneath glimmering cobwebs. Rattling claws on rotted wood.



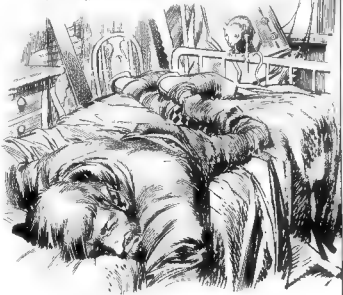
Upstairs, there were two dark rooms. In one, was a bed. Broken, sagging, covered with a mildewed rancid blanket . . . but still, a bed. Krebs fell on it, and he was asleep almost at once.

The mother took the children into the other room. For them, there was a musty pile of moldy rags. She stayed with them until they had fallen asleep.



Then she kissed them and left the noise. It was past midnight and she had eight hours of work ahead of her . . . downtown, in the office building where she was a charwoman.

Krebs did not see the huge beady-eyed rat which leaped up onto the foot of his bed, later, and sat there, staring at him.



But he saw it in the morning. Saw it and hurled a broken chair after it as it dove through a hole in the wall.

The chair smashed against the already-cracked plaster, gouging a great chunk of the rotten stuff loose, and sending a hollow reverberation echoing through the abandoned old house.



Krebs was feeling mean, the way he always did after a drunk. When the children, awakened by the noise, ran in, frightened and crying, he heaved himself up from the filthy bed and started after them, mumbling

"Shut up! Whining brats! Hanging onto me like

But the mother was home by then. She appeared suddenly, got in Krebs's way, stood between him and her children.

"Get out of my way!" he snarled

"No, Frank!" The mother was rock.



"I'll take care of them," she said as she turned away. "Now come downstairs. There's an old stove. I bought some groceries and got a fire going. You'd better have something to eat."

But Krebs did not eat. Sometimes, when he was sober, he was almost afraid of his wife. She was so . . . so . . . Blast her! And those brats of hers too!

Her cheap pocketbook was on the bed. He rifled through it, found a dollar and some silver in it.



"Just wait till your mother's gone," he told them softly. But it was the mother who came understanding.

"I told you," she said. "You're not going to touch them. You'll have to kill me first . . ."

It happened so suddenly. The rage came like fire. Krebs's fist swung in a short jolting arc, and the mother was flung backward.



Her head slammed against the foot of the bed, and she sunk to the floor. Blood seeped slowly into the splintered boards.

And behind Krebs there was a scratching. The rat had come out of its hole and now sat on its haunches, watching him.

Suddenly, Krebs was sober. Suddenly he was on his knees beside his wife, shaking her, screaming at her.

"Get up, get up, get up . . ."



Only she would never get up. Because the mother was dead. He'd killed her.

He sat there stupidly beside her in an alcoholic daze. And the rat watched.

Until Krebs stumbled to his feet, and kicked at it viciously, and it dove twittering back into its hole.



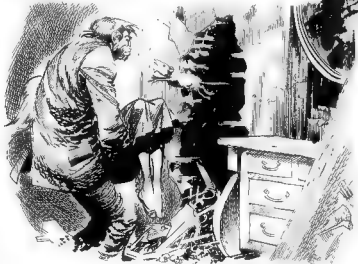
Krebs stayed in his room all that day. It was not until night, until the children had cried themselves to sleep upon their bed of rags, that he left the old house. There was a lumberyard he knew . . .

When he staggered back, he was carrying a stolen hundred-pound sack of builders' plaster



Breaking down the wall in the room where he slept was easy. All it meant was enlarging the opening he had already put in it. But there was the rat . . .

It appeared suddenly. And it watched. It watched, twittering and restless, as he tore down the moldy plaster and the rotting lath underneath. It watched when he stooped and lifted the corpse and carried it awkwardly to the wall. And then, suddenly, it leaped . . .



For a wild, horrible moment, its teeth were tearing at Krebs's throat, its claws ripping for a foothold on his liquor-stained filthy clothing

The corpse fell, thrashing stiffly. Krebs sprawled. And the feid breath of the thing was in his nostrils; its slaving yellow fangs were slashing at his jugular vein

His fist smashed down on the rat's spine like a hammer



The rat shuddered from the blow and lay still.

Krebs struggled to his feet, his breath coming in great rasping sobs, his intestines writhing.

It took hours to hide the corpse behind a wall of fresh plaster, cunningly smeared and splattered with dirt so that it looked as old and scabrous as the other walls.

Then Krebs turned back to the rat. But it was gone. It had been stunned, not killed.



In the morning Krebs went to the children. "Your mother's gone," he told them brutally. And between their tortured, muffled sobs: "She ran out, on you! Like I always knew she would!"

The policeman he found later believed his story. And why not? One look at him.

That same afternoon a woman from the Welfare Board came and took the children away.



They went with her, whimpering, and Krebs breathed a sigh of relief. He hadn't realized how taut his nerves had become. He needed a drink. Lots of drinks. But money was a problem.

He solved that problem, though. There was a woman he followed into the park. A woman who screamed when he snatched her purse and ran...

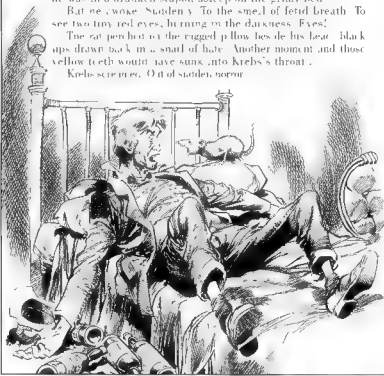


In the purse, there was more than eighty dollars. And so, that night, Krebs bought two dozen bottles of fiery whiskey to the bedroom. Within an hour, he was snoring. Within two, he was in a drunken stupor, asleep on the grimy bed.

But he awoke. Stunned. To the smell of ferid breath. To see two tiny red eyes, burning in the darkness. Eyes!

The rat perched on the ragged pillow beside his head. Black lips drawn back in a snarl of hate. Another moment and those yellow teeth would have sunk into Krebs's throat.

Krebs screamed. Out of sudden, horror



The rat vanished. But it did not go far. Near its hole, it stopped, sat up to stare at him. With a fearful look that was calculating, cunning and patient.

Patient!

That was when Krebs first began to suspect.

"You!" he breathed. "You!"



But that was insane! A corpse is a corpse! The life, the hate of a dead woman does not enter the body of a rat!

And yet, afterward, the rat was always there. The two dozen bottles dwindled to ten, eight. But drunkenness was not enough to blot out that nagging persistent thought.

Once, Krebs had a wife, did he? He went to the wall where he'd hid on his handwork, and put his ear to it. He listened, hearing only the sound of his own heartbeat.

Until he heard the other sound. The soft restless stirring

No! The dead are dead! The rat! It must be the rat! Moving inside the wall!

But the rat sat at the other end of the room snarling.

And each time that Krebs went to the wall, the rat snarled. As I told you!

"You said . . . you'd take care of the kids!" Krebs yelled at it furiously. "All right! The kids are gone! Why don't you go find them! Leave me alone!"



The rat drew back a little, but otherwise, it did not move. It watched. Perpetually. A hundred times during the long black nights, it crawled up onto the filthy bed, a hundred times, Krebs waiting until it was close to his throat . . . and then struck savagely. But always, the rat avoided the blow. Always, it returned to stare, and wait, patiently.

There was no doubt, after a while, that the rat was stalking Krebs. It chilled him. But he could not leave. Not so long as there was that patient look in the rat's eyes. Not so long as the rat lived. It was a contest . . . a duel. In Krebs's clouded brain, the rat became his wife, and his wife became the rat. He set traps for it, contrived killing snares. But the rat avoided them. Twice, he plugged its hole in the wall with shards of broken glass so that the rat could not dive to safety in time of danger. But those yellow fangs created new holes.

Some nights, Krebs lay on his bed, bottle in hand, and spoke to the rat. Placatingly. Almost pleadingly. "Please," he would slobber. "Leave me alone. I . . . I never hurt the kids!" And when the rat would remain immobile, his bottle would suddenly be hurled, to splinter against the floor or wall. And Krebs would scream. "All right! So you were a good mother! Well, you weren't good enough to keep me from sending your brats to a home, were you? You think you'll get revenge, don't you? But you won't! I'll kill you first! I'll kill . . . you . . ."



Only only hadn't he already *done that*? Some times he remembered. Other times he didn't. His head spun in inebriated confusion. He would have to kill the rat. That much he knew. So he planned its death cunningly, strewed with whiskey. But his plans never worked.

Finally, there was a night when Krebs drank too much, even for him. He pounced on the wall, daring his wife to come out, daring the rat to come out.

And it did. It dived between his legs, and when Krebs went after it, he stumbled and fell.

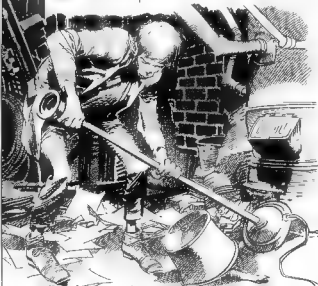


It was not a deep slash. He had luckily stirred too soon. But, the next time.

There could be no next time? Next time, the rat would win! If he remained as he was.

Krebs drank no more that night. Dashed as his senses were, he knew enough to that. Despite the burning, yearning ache deep in his gut, he did not touch the last of the full bottles. Not that night nor the next day. By then he was stone solid.

In the cellar, he found the tarnished remains of an old brass lamp.



He lay on the musty, rotten floor, unable to move, paralyzed with drink.

And it was only the pain that woke him, from his lethargy. He put a hand to his throat, suddenly. And his fingers, armed with fury, softness, came away wet.

Blood. His blood. The rat. He screamed.

And the rat scurried away.



The lamp stand, ripped from its base, made a heavy, four-foot long clank of solid metal.

There was a grim resolve in Krebs's every move when he climbed the rotting staircase with its rickety balustrade to the bedroom.

Glaws skittered all about him as he walked. But those rats could matter. Only the rat mattered!

By the flickering light of the candle stub, Krebs sat in the dismal bedroom later, waiting.

And in time, the rat's lumpy body crawled out of its hole in the wall.



Krebs's stick. The brass pole splintered the rotten flooring. Again! Again! And still again! While, seemingly a miss, blows that the rat dodged easily. But there was a nu-hud to Krebs's attack. Each blow drove the rat closer to the open bedroom door. And at last—there was no place else for it to go. It dodged through the opening, avoiding a savage final assault.



The brass club was raised, ready. Krebs was almost flooring now.

"C'mon! C'mon! C'mon, come on!"

He could never smile. "Come on, little . . . Mother! You want your revenge don't you? You want to pay me back for what I did to your brats, don't you?"

The rat did not move. Only its beady eyes flickered. As if it were planning. Calculating.

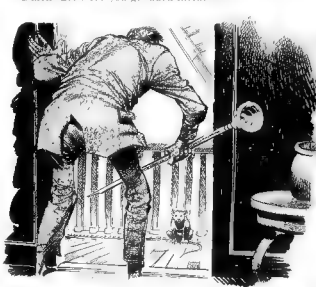


Then—it paused. I reared back, bristling spine against the peeling balustrade. And Krebs grinned in triumph.

"I was right," he hissed. "You won't leave this room, will you? You won't leave your loot, will you? You are her, aren't you? You are!"

It was so simple. Always, the rat hid a secret in that bedroom! No, where else!

"Now, we'll see!" Krebs stood in the doorway. "C'mon! Let's see you get back inside!"

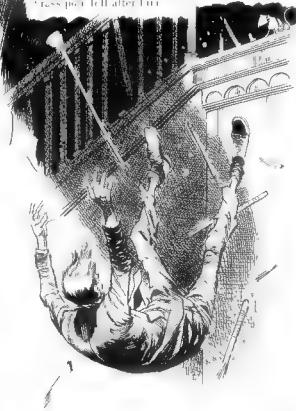


The rat leaped. But not toward the door. Toward the stairs. Krebs swung, turning half around in his eagerness. The club struck, and rebounded from the floor. And at that moment, when he was off balance, with his back to the balustrade, the rat attacked. One incredibly quick turn, and it was in the air, eyes balefully afire, fangs gleaming.



Krebs dropped, he clubed away his arms, and in fact on the rat's body drove him back so that he had to grasp at the brass race for support. He missed, and with broke away at his waist with a rotten cry, ready to gasp.

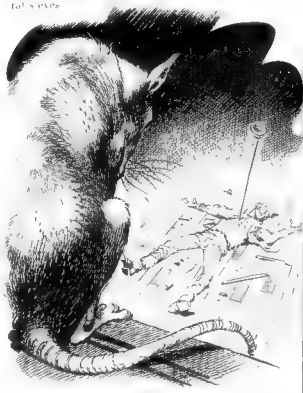
Krebs dropped into unconsciousness, so that the brass pole fell after him.



Krebs struck first. But a U.S. sailor, that his spine was shattered, was a lost player.

Just before the jagged end of the brass pole pinned him to the floor.

From above, the rat looked down. But Krebs could not move. Slowly, the rat's head disappeared from the rat's eyes.



Certain, the rat turned, went back into the bedroom to its hole in the wall. It moved slowly. There was no need to hurry. No hurry more. The murder was no longer cause for concern.

Through the tunnel, guided in the melody with Pest the corpse falling slowly in the darkness.

The rat quickened its pace.

In the rest, were four minutes. The rat was itself waited.

The rats' bodies were rings. And now that the danger, then had not remained, the rat was no longer thought of, the only one of the rat.



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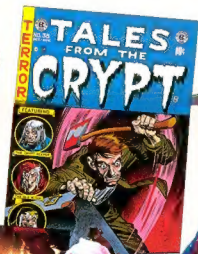
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